

Submission form: Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy

Your details

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About you

Please tell us which best describes you:

☐ Victorian resident
☐ Victorian business owner/operator
☐ Industry professional
☐ Community organisation representative
☒ Local government representative
☐ State government representative
☐ Researcher
☐ Other (please specify): Click or tap here to enter text.

Your focus areas

Select the topics or regions you are providing feedback on (select all that apply):

Topics	Regions
☐ Across sectors	☒ Regional Victoria
☐ Circular economy	☒ Urban growth areas
☐ Cities	☐ Melbourne
☐ Climate change	
☒ Community infrastructure	
☐ Education	
☐ Energy	
☒ Freight	
☐ Health	
☐ Housing	
☐ Infrastructure for Victoria’s First Peoples	
☒ Transport	
☐ Water	

Your feedback

Add as many sections as you need to provide all your feedback in this submission.

Topic/area:	Community Infrastructure
Recommendation name:	Facilitate markets and invest in kindergarten infrastructure
Recommendation number:	2
1. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ In part
2. Tell us why	Baw Baw Shire Council agrees that greater targeted investment and information sharing is needed to facilitate the delivery of kindergarten infrastructure where it is most needed across Victoria. Baw Baw Shire Council's Early Years Infrastructure Plan data shows a 68% increase in 3–4-year-olds living in Baw Baw Shire by 2036.
3. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Council holds concerns that the Victorian Government and Department of Education modelling does not reflect family preference, and that there is too much reliance on expansion of kindergartens in a long day care setting to meet increased demand. Forecast data from the <i>Baw Baw Municipal Early Years Infrastructure Plan 2023-2041</i>, indicates that our municipality will require an estimated 360 new educators and an additional 1,500 licensed Long Day Care (LDC) places by 2032. To date, the uptake of funded kindergarten in an integrated long day care setting in Baw Baw Shire is very low sitting at about 10% of total kinder enrolments. This does not align with the Department of Education's predicted modelling based on 50%. A recent Baw Baw Shire family survey confirmed 81.8% of survey respondents prefer to access kindergarten through a standalone kindergarten service, or one located on a primary school site.
4. Include proposed changes and improvements	Local Governments are best placed to understand the infrastructure needs of their communities. Greater consultation and partnership with local government should be prioritised to ensure planning and investments accurately reflect local circumstances. Information and data sharing should be prioritised. The Department of Education continues to rely predominantly on Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2) data to determine the location and quantity of early years infrastructure required. The SA2 catchments do not always effectively reflect the size, geography and traveling distances of large regional and rural LGAs. Without proper local context, infrastructure may not be built in locations that have the greatest need or may be built where there is low demand. Facilitating market investment should be undertaken based on accurate data and forecasting Baw Baw Shire Council's preference is to base early years planning on precincts that more accurately reflect local catchment areas. Council's Family and Children's Services team have identified eight early years precincts for Baw Baw Shire:

	• Warragul • Drouin • Trafalgar East • Trafalgar South, Yarragon South and District • Longwarry and Longwarry North • Baw Baw, Willow Grove and District • Yarragon, Nilma and Darnum • Neerim South, Noojee and District To ensure investment is properly targeted, Council requests that the Victorian Government acknowledge our preferred planning precincts by specifically naming them in replacement of the pre-determined SA2s.
Topic/area:	Community Infrastructure
Recommendation name:	Build libraries and aquatic centres for Melbourne's growing communities
Recommendation number:	5
5. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ In part
6. Tell us why	Growing regional communities also require investment in community infrastructure, including libraries and aquatic centres. The 30-year infrastructure strategy overlooks the infrastructure pressures faced by high growth areas outside the seven councils in the interface zone. Without greater infrastructure support over the next 30 years, residents in Peri-Urban regions like Baw Baw Shire Council will face inequity in accessing services.
7. Share any supporting evidence or examples	The Warragul and Drouin Growth Precinct was named "the fastest growing significant urban area in Australia, up 41% over 10 years to reach 46,000 at June 2023." (Bernard Salt, <i>'The 99 fastest-growing towns and cities in Australia'</i>. Baw Baw Shire Council continues to experience high internal migration, particularly from the Southeastern Suburbs of Melbourne. Baw Baw's total population is forecast to increase by <u>47% to 87,281</u> by 2041, with our two largest towns - <u>Warragul is predicted to increase by 74%</u> and <u>Drouin's to increase by 64%</u> in the same period. Just as fast-growing metro communities are struggling to keep pace with infrastructure to meet population growth, peri-urban communities like Baw Baw Shire also face similar challenges as more and more people seek affordable homes and lifestyles. Baw Baw Shire Council would encourage Infrastructure Victoria to broaden recommendations to include funding support for library and

	aquatic facilities in recognised growth precincts beyond the metro fringe. Residents in Baw Baw's growth precinct have been facing inequitable access to library facilities for many years. Building a new library and community hub were identified as the highest priority in the Baw Baw Civic Precinct Masterplan as the current Warragul Library is not fit for purpose, does not meet contemporary accessibility standards and has limited space to offer the level and diversity of programming our growing population needs and expects. Council and the community have been advocating for the Australian Government and Victorian Government to contribute co-funding to the Baw Baw Culture and Connection Precinct: New Library and Learning Centre for several years. This inter-generational, Green-star 5 rated community facility will provide co-located services and facilities in partnership with corporate and educational partners. Scheduled to begin construction this year, the \$30 million project is the most significant community infrastructure project in Baw Baw Shire Council's history. Baw Baw Shire Council committed \$10 million co-funding to the project and successfully secured \$14.5 million via the Growing Regions Program, \$1.5 million via the Victorian Living Libraries Fund and \$3 million via the Victorian Growing Suburbs Fund. Despite the significant long-term community benefit the project will provide, funding such a project has been incredibly challenging as Council negotiates balancing the many infrastructure demands that high population growth in Warragul and Drouin is triggering.
8. Include proposed changes and improvements	Council would encourage the Victorian Government to accept and broaden the co-funding model for libraries and aquatic centers recommended by Infrastructure Victoria in this strategy to encompass more high growth communities where a need is identified.

Topic/area:	Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities
Recommendation name:	Run faster bus services, more often, in Victoria's largest cities. Run more bus and coach services in regional Victoria
Recommendation number:	9 & 12
9. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ In part

10. Tell us why	Council agrees that Victorians should have good access to housing jobs, services and opportunities and agree that increasing and improving bus services and connecting small rural townships to larger regional centres will address disadvantage, reduce transport emissions and make Victorians more connected. However the strategy provides little direction for increasing public transport infrastructure and usage for most of regional Victoria. As Victoria's fastest growing peri-urban region and the fifth-fastest growing municipality in the state, the strategy does little to address our region's dependence on motor vehicles. At the time of the 2021 Census, 67.5% of employed residents in Baw Baw Shire commute to work by car, with 23% of Baw Baw's labour force traveling more than 50km to work compared to 6.33% for Victoria. Without an integrated strategy to increase public transport access, and grow local employment opportunities, cars will continue to dominate as the transport mode of choice in Baw Baw and across Gippsland. While Baw Baw Shire has relatively good east to west public transport connection via V/line -Gippsland Line, Baw Baw Shire suffers from poor North - South public transport connectivity. For example, an apprentice living in Warragul, Drouin or surrounds needing to travel to Leongatha to undertake a trades course at TAFE, is unable to efficiently travel to South Gippsland on public transport. South Gippsland students are also unable to efficiently access TAFE campuses in Warragul. Services are too infrequent and timed poorly to support students and workers. The plan highlights that the Government rarely revises bus services to match changes in people's needs and travel destinations. This is true in Gippsland. Uptake of public bus services in Baw Baw is low. The frequency, routes and timetable of services do not meet the needs of local community members. Consequently Baw Baw Shire residents rely on vehicles to access work, education and services and those without cars miss out on services and opportunities. At an infrastructure planning level, outdated Precinct Structure Plans are hampering Baw Baw Shire's ability to ensure new developments will be able to accommodate public busses and active transport modes.
11. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Council has been approached by members of rural communities asking for support advocate for increased access to public transport. In 2023, a campaign was led by the Neerim District Progress Association, who made a submission to the Victorian Minister for Transport and Minister for Regional Development asking to increase weekday services between Neerim South and Noojee and Warragul. The submission put forward that extra bus services would particularly support young people to access work and entertainment and support older residents without a car as well increasing visitors and boosting tourism. <u>Campaign calls for more bus services 5 Sep 2023</u>

12. Include proposed changes and improvements	Recommend that the state government partner and support local governments to accelerate growth precinct planning and reviews to ensure new regional housing developments can accommodate public transport and encourage active modes of transport in the future.
Topic/area:	Make local streets safer for children and communities
Recommendation name:	Reduce speed limits to 30km/h on local streets, starting in places that children often visit including around schools, playgrounds, childcare centres and kindergartens
Recommendation number:	14
13. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ In part
14. Tell us why	Council appreciates increased measures to protect children and families and encourage active transport. The introduction of 30km/h speed limits in high density metro areas with high numbers of pedestrians will credibly provide safety benefits. In regional areas, where the population is dispersed, a majority of families will always rely on cars and school busses to transport children to places of education. Most schools, daycare centre and kindergartens in regional areas have dedicated off street parking and pick up drop off zones as part of the requirements of the planning scheme. Reducing the speed limit from 50km/h to 30km/h will likely slow local traffic flow but have very little impact pedestrian safety. Baw Baw supports retaining the 40km/h speed zones during school times
15. Share any supporting evidence or examples	
16. Include proposed changes and improvements	Click or tap here to enter text.

Topic/area:	Victorians are healthy and safe
Recommendation name:	Help government schools share their grounds
Recommendation number:	16

17. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
18. Tell us why	Baw Baw Shire Council supports extra help for schools across the state to voluntarily share their sporting facilities for local club and community use. Demand analysis for sporting reserves within Warragul and Drouin Precinct Structure Plans, revised in 2024, indicate that by 2041, an additional four ovals are required to service Drouin, and three for Warragul. Additional ovals in Longwarry and Trafalgar are a priority to enable Council to decant clubs whilst undertaking existing oval upgrades across Baw Baw over the next 10 to 15 years. Baw Baw Shire supports the recommendation to provide extra help for schools to incentivise shared access to ovals, as well as funding to improve and upgrade infrastructure such as extra lighting, sports field upgrades and new toilets/ change facilities on school grounds.
19. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Sharing community facilities has been an ongoing discussion between Council and local state schools since the <i>Inquiry into the Sharing of Government and Community Facilities</i> by the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission in 2009. More recently the AFL released the 'Breaking New Ground' funding program, specifically to unlock new grounds or school sites to meet AFL growth. Despite offering to install lighting on school ovals to numerous local schools, none of them have so far taken up the opportunity. Despite funding availability, Council has not yet been able to persuade any schools to participate in a facility sharing agreement, largely due to the maintenance and extra administrative involved for the school. Recent investment by the Victorian Government to upgrade facilities at Drouin Primary School has added a fully compliant competition-grade gym to accommodate an extra 225 students. With basketball as the sport with the highest participation in Baw Baw Shire, it would be advantageous if these facilities were able to be made available for community use outside of school hours.
20. Include proposed changes and improvements	Helping schools share indoor stadiums in addition to outdoor facilities in areas with high demand would further benefit local communities.

Topic/area:	Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy
Recommendation name:	Plan for more efficient and sustainable urban freight. Develop a network of urban freight delivery precincts in Melbourne to improve freight productivity and reduce emissions.
Recommendation number:	Future Option
21. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
22. Tell us why	Baw Baw Shire supports the recommendation to ‘empower’ local governments to create and enforce urban freight delivery precincts’ Baw Baw Shire is currently updating land strategies and engaging with industry, businesses and local communities to explore the feasibility of a freight precinct in Longwarry on Melbourne’s eastern fringe. Agriculture and manufacturing are major industries and two of the greatest economic drivers in Baw Baw and the greater Gippsland region. Creating freight infrastructure that will more efficiently support these industries will not only have environmental benefits but create needed employment opportunities in a major growth area that is transitioning away from coal and forestry.
23. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Baw Baw Shire Council is seeking to collaborate with government, industry and service providers to investigate and facilitate a regionally significant logistics hub in Longwarry. The project aims to consolidate efficient transport links, attract long term business investment and provide future employment opportunities essential for the greater Gippsland region. By leveraging existing geographic and industry strengths, the Longwarry Logistics and Employment Hub has the potential to become a significant inter-regional economic node, integrating the economies of metropolitan Melbourne with the Latrobe Valley and broader Gippsland region.
24. Include proposed changes and improvements	Click or tap here to enter text.

More feedback (optional)

Tell us about infrastructure challenges, gaps or opportunities not covered by the draft strategy. This can include things you think we should add to an existing recommendation, or suggestions for a new recommendation.

Please provide evidence for your suggestions. This can include data, specific examples, cost benefit analyses, surveys, or program evaluations. Also, explain how your suggestions align with the objectives of our draft strategy (see page 11 of the draft strategy).

Suggestions for new recommendations should point towards infrastructure opportunities that can deliver long-term benefits for Victorians. They should also be areas where the Victorian Government has a leading role.

Baw Baw Shire Council appreciates that the Australian economy faces shortages in the skills and materials needed to build infrastructure projects and that the Victorian Government has limited capacity to fund new major projects. However, Baw Baw Shire Council is frustrated that there is a lack of policy recommendations relating to regional and peri-urban infrastructure priorities particularly in relation to roads, freight and public transport planning.

Infrastructure investment and planning support should be offered to high growth regions and precincts beyond Melbourne's interface commensurate with forecast growth.

The current draft strategy builds upon the 2021-2051 Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy focus on exploring 'Smarter Ways to use existing infrastructure'. The emphasis of many of the recommendations is on encouraging behavioural change and improving efficiency. Since the last Infrastructure Victoria strategy was published in 2021, Baw Baw has seen little commitment from the State Government to plan or facilitate 'Fit for purpose transport solutions which allow regional Victorians to access essential services'. The new draft strategy proposes very little that would assist regional Councils to plan and deliver safer, better connected and more sustainable multi-modal transport solutions. The growing dependence on local and arterial road infrastructure to support increasing populations and greater usage is scarcely acknowledged, nor is future planning for these networks adequately identified.

While population growth and employment are weaker for the wider Gippsland region, Baw Baw Shire bucks this trend and is in the midst of a sustained population boom largely due to internal migration from city and regional movers. Positioned just outside Melbourne's urban fringe, Baw Baw Shire faces infrastructure pressures in the urbanised parts of the shire along the Gippsland Rail Corridor and M1. Some of the recommendations that apply to South Eastern Growth Corridor should be extended to incorporate Baw Baw's growth precincts and plan for the forthcoming growth that it is experiencing at the moment and over the next 30 years.

The draft recommendation to 'prepare and publish infrastructure sector plans to shape Victoria's cities' should extend to all identified growth areas in Victoria. The need to plan and sequence the infrastructure needed to support growth does not stop at the metro fringe.

Local Roads

In the next 20 years Warragul's population is predicted to increase by 74% and Drouin's by 64%. Without investment and planning support, compounding local and arterial road congestion in the Baw Baw growth precinct is guaranteed. While Baw Baw Shire Council supports any recommendations that will improve regional public transport access and increase uptake, roads will remain the primary way that people and goods move about regional and peri-urban areas.

Local transport systems in regional areas can and should be designed to better meet the needs of current and future residents. More assistance is needed in regional growth areas to ensure vehicle, pedestrian and public transport modes work together in a modern way to service growing populations and to ensure network resilience in emergencies and natural disasters.

Regional and Peri-Urban Councils need support and state partnership to review and improve current transport plans to mitigate known issues, prevent future conflict points, and ensure better long term transport outcomes.

While Baw Baw Shire has relatively good east to west connection via the M1 and Gippsland rail corridor, the Shire suffers from poor north - south road and rail and public transport connectivity. As development continues to outpace infrastructure planning processes, Council is running out of options to plan town bypasses and improve road network connectivity. This work is needed urgently to make freight more efficient, to reduce CBD congestion and to connect residents to services and opportunities to the north and south of the shire.

Regional and Peri-urban Councils need greater transport planning support to resolve issues now before it becomes too difficult and expensive to find solutions down the track.

Example: Baw Baw PSPs

To manage forecast growth, Council prepared Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) for Drouin and Warragul over a decade ago. The PSPs, approved by the Minister for Planning in 2014, aimed to provide strategic direction for Council to appropriately plan for housing, township character, open spaces, transport infrastructure in Baw Baw's growth precinct. These two towns have grown and changed rapidly over the last 10 years. However, policy to address population growth and state planning processes have not evolved at the same pace. In the current planning environment by the time projects are completed, they are at best, outdated and at worst, irrelevant.

Ten years on from their approval, Baw Baw Shire Council is not only confronting underfunded Development Contribution Plans (DCPs) but is faced with local infrastructure and transport projects proceeding that will not accommodate future traffic volumes, allow the passage of public transport, or freight vehicles.

Further to this, many of the project designs contained within the PSPs that are still to be built are no longer feasible or appropriate to service the community. For example:

- Arterial intersections that no longer meet state legislated design standards.
- Road designs that will not accommodate buses hampering public transport service in new neighbourhoods.
- Problematic drainage designs not appropriate to cater for future development, increasing flood risk and the prospect of site-by-site drainage solutions which further reduce the net developable area for housing

Baw Baw Shire Council and developers are currently locked into delivering these outdated PSPs for Warragul and Drouin until legislated reviews are completed. These plans make it difficult for Council to create plans that would allow the network to be improved to operate in a modern fashion. To proceed with building under-planned and under-engineered infrastructure, like some of the road and drainage projects stipulated in Warragul's and Drouin's current PSPs, will result in poor safety, connectivity and environmental outcomes for our community and lead to increased financial burden to rectify these issues in the future. Now is the best time to invest in new planning and problem solving.

Current examples highlight situations where existing narrow road reserves are being upgraded to link or collector standards, yet are expected to accommodate arterial-level traffic volumes. A

collaborative and strategic approach is essential to prevent the centralised structure of Warragul and Drouin from continuing in this way. Instead, planning should focus on enhancing the movement of freight, public transport, and the growing populations of these townships.

Supporting growing regional Councils to complete local network planning and to accelerate legislated PSP reviews would ensure that the right infrastructure will be put in place to accommodate the transport needs of the future.

Freight Upgrades

While Council supports investment in urban rail freight, the draft strategy does little to address road freight efficiency and connectivity in regional areas.

As our population and regional output grow, there is an ever-increasing demand and utilisation of the local rural road network. Larger faster trucks with heavier loads are competing with increased vehicle traffic in growing rural shires, this is impacting road freight productivity.

Gippsland boasts over 9,000 food and fibre businesses and employs 16% of the workforce in the region, with about three quarters of the workers engaged on the farm and roughly 25% in value-added production. Gippsland produces 22% of Australia's dairy including milk, milk powder, butter, cheese, yogurt and other value-added products. The region also produces 25% of the beef in Victoria (much of it for export), wool and prime lamb as well as 27% of Victoria's vegetables. Further, Gippsland houses the largest pulp and paper mill in Australia and produces 23% of Victoria's timber.

Regional areas make a massive contribution, growing food and manufacturing goods to support Victoria and Australia's population. Reliable and efficient roads are crucial to support the safety and sustainability of these industries.