

VICTORIA'S DRAFT 30-YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEG

Submission by CCF Victoria to Infrastructure Victoria

April 2025



**CIVIL CONTRACTORS
FEDERATION**
VICTORIA

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Acknowledgement of traditional owners

CCF Victoria acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live and work. We recognise Aboriginal people as Australia's first peoples and the traditional owners of this land. In recognising their connection to our land and waterways, we pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

Introduction

Civil Contractors Federation Victoria is pleased to have the opportunity to make the following submission to Infrastructure Victoria's consultation on **Victoria's Draft 30-year Infrastructure Strategy**.

It is encouraging to see infrastructure, and particularly civil infrastructure, being prioritised in the planning for the state's growth over the coming decades. It is important this planning work and vision-setting is backed up with a practical plan to achieve the stated objectives, in lockstep with industry.

A fundamental premise of our submission is that **civil infrastructure is the very foundation** of all our cities, towns and suburbs. Therefore, the civil industry must be included in all early stages of infrastructure planning and design.

Civil contractors:

- Lay the roads, rail and active transport infrastructure **that gets Victorians moving**;
- Build bridges and tunnels that **connect communities**, supporting the **growth of liveable and thriving communities**;
- Provide the earthmoving works, foundations and underground assets and pipelines for sub-divisions on which **affordable homes of choice, community and**

commercial properties can be built.

In excess of **45,000 Victorians** are actively employed by state-based civil construction businesses, in line with the state's Local Jobs First policy. Victoria's civil, land development and infrastructure industries also contribute around 50 per cent, approximately \$22 billion, in state tax revenue¹.

What's more, by prioritising local content – more work for local contractors, subcontractors and their employees – the Government can deliver more affordable, timely and better-funded infrastructure for the community.

Rather than responding to each individual, relevant recommendation and future option proposed by Infrastructure Victoria, our submission outlines key recommendations aggregated under civil-industry specific recommendations within Infrastructure Victoria's strategy objectives² including:

1. Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities.
2. Victorians are healthy and safe.
3. Victoria has a thriving natural environment.
4. Victoria is resilient to climate change and other future risks.

¹ Capacity Constraints in the Civil, Land Development and Infrastructure Industries, FY22 figures

² <https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/resources/strategy-objectives-engagement-report-2023>

5. Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy.

The Civil Contractors Federation

Civil Contractors Federation Victoria is the peak representative body for the civil construction sector in Victoria.

More than 45,000 Victorians are actively employed in stable, secure jobs provided by civil contractors. As industry working for industry, we represent 460 contractor and associate members across the construction supply chain, ranging from tier 1, 2, 3, 4, SME's and sole trader ABN holders. Forty-three per cent (43%) of our members are regional businesses, many of whom are family enterprises.

The civil construction industry is responsible for the construction and maintenance of Victoria's infrastructure, including roads, rail, bridges, water supply, pipelines, drainage, ports, energy and utilities infrastructure. Some of the businesses we represent also play a vital role in the housing and commercial building construction industry by providing

earthmoving and land development services including the provision of power, water, communications, and gas.

We are the Strategic Adviser to Government on the state's civil construction industry, with the knowledge and authority to promote, cultivate and advance positive and relevant civil construction industry policy in Victoria.

As part of a federated structure nationally, with offices in every major capital city, we are well-positioned to capture, develop and share insights on civil construction matters from other jurisdictions. This helps us to inform industry best practice for the benefit of Victorian Government and industry stakeholders and ultimately the Victorian community.

“Civil infrastructure is the very foundation of all our cities and towns, suburbs and neighbourhoods.”



Strategy Objective – Victorians have good access to housing jobs, services and opportunities

1. Build more social housing
3. Plan and deliver expanded and new schools
4. Expand TAFE in Melbourne's growth areas and some large regional centres
5. Build libraries and aquatic centres for Melbourne's growing communities
- 8-12. Extend tram, train, bus, coach infrastructure

HOUSING: As stated above, a fundamental premise of our submission is that **civil infrastructure is the very foundation** of all our cities and towns, suburbs and neighbourhoods.

As far as this applies to housing affordability and choice, we assert that you cannot spend a dollar on housing **until you've invested a dollar in the underlying civil infrastructure.**

Before any affordable home of choice can go up – **including social housing** -

earthmoving and demolition works must happen to prepare the housing foundations. On top of that, the underground assets and pipelines connecting homes to the energy, utilities and telco services must also be installed or - in the case of brownfield infill areas - refurbished or upgraded.

PUBLIC FACILITIES: For public property facilities of any type or size – schools, kindergartens, libraries, aquatic centres, prisons, hospitals and health facilities - the underpinning horizontal civil infrastructure (roads and footpaths, underground utilities and water services, land clearing, demolition, land development) must be the first consideration.

Like housing, you can't spend a dollar on property developments until you've spent a dollar on the civil infrastructure underpinning all such facilities.

CCF Victoria recommendations:

1. Civil construction must be prioritised up front in the planning and design stages for all types of property: private residential dwellings in every category and public facilities.
This applies for both greenfield areas requiring new infrastructure and for brownfield/infill areas requiring refurbishing and upgrading of existing infrastructure such as underground utilities and services.

TAFE EXPANSION: The ill-advised approach to funding skills training by bolstering TAFE – in any region, not only Melbourne - at the increasing expense of cutting critical funding to industry-led training and apprenticeships suppliers will only result in **worsening workforce and skills shortages**.

As many as 80 per cent of VET students choose independent training providers over TAFE³, while data shows that private RTOs consistently achieve better completion rates and superior employment outcomes for students compared to TAFE⁴.

In reality, **cuts to training and apprenticeship placements** delivered

by private and independent RTOs, while pouring more money into TAFE amounts to a reduction in existing capability and capacity.

However, the Government has a huge opportunity to reverse declining labour force rates and save money by investing in existing training facilities and capacity provided by independent industry and private RTOs, that complements TAFE training. By using and partnering with industry and private RTOs, the Government can **achieve quicker outcomes at a lower cost**.



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<https://www.iteca.edu.au/news/skills/2025q1/free.tafe.bca.opposition.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/vet-student-outcomes-2024>

CCF Victoria recommendations:

That the Government:

2. Accepts that independent industry RTOs have as much a place in the training environment as TAFE;
3. Reverses cuts to skills funding and placement numbers for independent industry RTOs and increases funding and placements numbers. In doing so, the Government will **increase its chances of success** in filling skills gaps, especially in construction, and even exceed workforce capacity targets and ultimately lift genuine productivity.

TRANSPORT EXTENSIONS:

Adding new and extending existing bus, tram and train services across the state is a good move that will support Victoria's growing population.

However, it is important that the underpinning roads, rail and pedestrian infrastructure has an appropriate level of investment that keeps the state's transport infrastructure and active transport objectives on track.

Put simply, new roads and rail infrastructure and substantial budgeting for and investment in ongoing maintenance of these assets is critical, to avoid problems of the past; for example, the reported neglect of regional roads networks that are critical to supporting the freight industry and jobs.

Proper investment in roads and rail infrastructure, especially ongoing maintenance requirements, is a great catalyst for jobs creation in areas where those jobs are needed; jobs that, in turn, support community and population growth and cost-of-living issues.

CCF Victoria recommendations:

4. Aligned to the recommended statewide extension of public transport services, the Government must **invest more equitably** across the state's infrastructure; not merely metropolitan Melbourne-centric projects but substantial investment in regional infrastructure.
5. That the Government includes civil construction expertise in the upfront feasibility planning, design and budgeting for new and existing infrastructure upgrades.

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Victorians are healthy and safe

15. Build safe cycling networks in Melbourne and regional cities

17-21. Invest in maintenance, upgrades and expansions of community health facilities

CYCLING NETWORK: As well as traditional transport infrastructure, civil construction is an advocate for healthier, modern modes of active transport.



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<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140521003200>

Bike riding is beneficial for community health, the environment and for reducing traffic congestion, particularly in built-up urban areas. Yet, bike lane infrastructure is perceived as inadequate, amounting to little more than a strip of paint separating cyclists from vehicles in many situations.

Three quarters of Victorians surveyed by Monash University indicated an interest in riding a bike, but only in high quality infrastructure that separates people from cars (such as off-road paths or protected bike lanes).⁵

CCF Victoria recommendations:

6. That civil construction is prioritised up front in the planning and design of cycling network infrastructure.
7. Given the size and nature of cycling network infrastructure – i.e. projects which are smaller in scope compared to mega-projects such as tunnelling – that planning and procurement provisions are kept minimal and streamlined, to ensure smaller civil contracting businesses are enabled to tender competitively and to ensure such projects can be approved and delivered quickly and effectively.

HEALTH FACILITIES: As with other public properties such as aquatic centres, schools, kindergartens and libraries, health facilities are also totally reliant on the foundational civil infrastructure – car parks, roads, footpaths and the connecting underground power utilities and water services - that make such facilities accessible and fit-for-purpose by community users.

As stated above, you can't spend a dollar on any property developments – new or existing facilities requiring renovation - until you've spent a dollar on the enabling underpinning infrastructure.

CCF Victoria recommendations:

8. Civil construction must be prioritised up front in the planning and design stages for all types of property builds, upgrades and expansions.
9. That old prisons or other facilities that are earmarked for closure are instead redeveloped and repurposed into more housing – also appropriately planned with the precursor enabling civil infrastructure as the first consideration.

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Strategy Objective – Victoria has a thriving natural environment

24. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from infrastructure

Strategy Objective – Victoria is resilient to climate change and other future risks

27-32. Better prepare infrastructure for climate change; Coordinate faster delivery of key energy infrastructure

REDUCE EMISSIONS: Civil contractors know that Net Zero is non-negotiable.

Transport alone is the third largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and, without further urgent action, is projected to be the highest emitting sector by 2030⁶.

⁶

<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/transport-and-infrastructure-net-zero-consultation-roadmap.pdf>

⁷ Source: DCCEEW, Australia's emissions projections 2023, Australian Government, 2023

Road vehicles account for the majority of transport emissions⁷ and this will only increase as more infrastructure is needed across Victoria over the coming decades.

Similarly, construction activity is a significant contributor to emissions and our industry is acutely aware of the urgency to decarbonise civil infrastructure in favour of cleaner, greener, more sustainable infrastructure.

Resilient infrastructure is another critical consideration, recognising that weather damage costs Victoria on average \$2.7 billion per year⁸.

Victoria's civil contracting industry has a pivotal, strategic role to play in supporting the planning and delivery of measures to build resilience to climate change and create thriving, sustainable natural environments.

As **Recommendation #29 - Coordinate faster delivery of key energy infrastructure** points out, the **enabling infrastructure** that will underpin energy projects is the critical priority to achieving the goals of the 30-year Strategy.

CCF Victoria recommends:

10. That the Government works closely with the state's civil industry to

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https://assets.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/assets/Weathering-the-storm_adapting-Victorias-infrastructure-to-climate-change_Final.pdf

develop a concrete roadmap to aid the transition to the green economy through infrastructure investment.

11. That any energy transition infrastructure roadmap includes renewable energy installations along infrastructure corridors: for example, small scale solar and wind installations alongside new roads, highways and rail developments - rather than large scale solar farms that swallow up valuable food producing agricultural land - to power those infrastructure projects and offset emissions; to feed into nearby neighbourhood batteries and power local community housing developments.

12. That the State Government establishes a dedicated 'Build to Withstand' Fund, enabling Councils to conduct priority pre-disaster investigation work to identify and address the highest priority infrastructure for resilience upgrades across the state.
13. That the Government allocates additional funding to develop resilient infrastructure standards for publication in Victoria's Infrastructure Design Manual and Engineering Design and Construction Manual for Growth Areas to support consistency and efficiency.





Strategy Objective – Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy

35-43. Prepare infrastructure sector plans; Reform infrastructure contributions; Create and preserve opportunities for future major infrastructure projects

PREPARE INFRASTRUCTURE

PLANS: As your Draft 30-year Strategy points out, infrastructure is “more productive when it is well-designed, built efficiently and maintained regularly”⁹.

This objective can be **more effectively and successfully realised** by consulting the vast experience, expertise and insights of civil contractors; the delivery experts practically building, restoring and maintaining infrastructure at the ground level, across all areas of the state.

To avoid the pitfalls of a boom-and-bust cycle in infrastructure development and investment, consistent and transparent long-term planning is essential.

The middle of the century is the next major, long-term milestone for vision-planning for the state, as laid out in the recent release of the New Plan for Victoria¹⁰.

We know the road to this destination requires civil infrastructure to be the bedrock but we can’t reach this destination without a concrete industry roadmap.

CCF Victoria strongly supports investment in public transport infrastructure as a vital component of Victoria’s future growth and sustainability. Improving public transport can reduce congestion, lower emissions and provide efficient urban mobility solutions.

However, it is imperative that this commitment does not come at the expense of road funding, particularly for regional communities. Any planning needs to ensure that infrastructure planning and provision is balanced and not heavily metro-centric.

Roads are the lifeblood of these areas, facilitating the movement of goods, services, and people, and connecting regional communities to economic opportunities and essential services.

⁹

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/operations/our-insights/infrastructure-productivity>

¹⁰

https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0033/739473/Final-Plan-for-Victoria-For-Web.pdf

Regional roads are crucial for agricultural, mining and tourism industries, not to mention the large number of jobs they create – all factors which are significant contributors to the state economy.

Neglecting road infrastructure can lead to isolation of these communities, hinder emergency response times, and create safety hazards due to deteriorating conditions. Furthermore, many regional areas do not have the population density to support extensive public transport systems, making well-maintained roads even more critical for their connectivity.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY: CCF Victoria is a strong supporter of efforts to increase recycled material in infrastructure projects. We have collaborated with ecologiQ on a range of initiatives promoting and amplifying the importance for civil contractors to prioritise the recycling and reuse of materials in construction projects.

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Additional recommendations

For all the strategic civil engineering, planning and design, it is the civil contractors **on the ground**, at the coalface, who practically deliver our state's infrastructure. In doing so, they develop bankable insights based on real world experiences that can be put to good effect in helping Government determine the best ways forward.

On this basis, we strongly recommend that the Government ensures civil contractors are included in all upfront strategic discussions, conceptualising, planning and design that precede any infrastructure plan or project.

We further submit:

- A. That the Government collaborates closely with CCF Victoria and the civil construction industry on a decade-by-decade roadmap for realistic infrastructure needs, particularly greenfields and regional areas, through to 2050 and beyond.
- B. That the Government urgently addresses **continuing workforce challenges** threatening Victoria's future infrastructure, housing, transport, freight and energy needs, and productivity, in close collaboration with the civil construction industry.

Summary / Close

We applaud Infrastructure Victoria for opening up this important consultation to industry submissions and look forward to ongoing collaboration with your agency to deliver the **critical enabling infrastructure** that the Government and the Victorian community need for a resilient, successful future; one hallmarked by economic growth and societal well-being.

If you require any more information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

