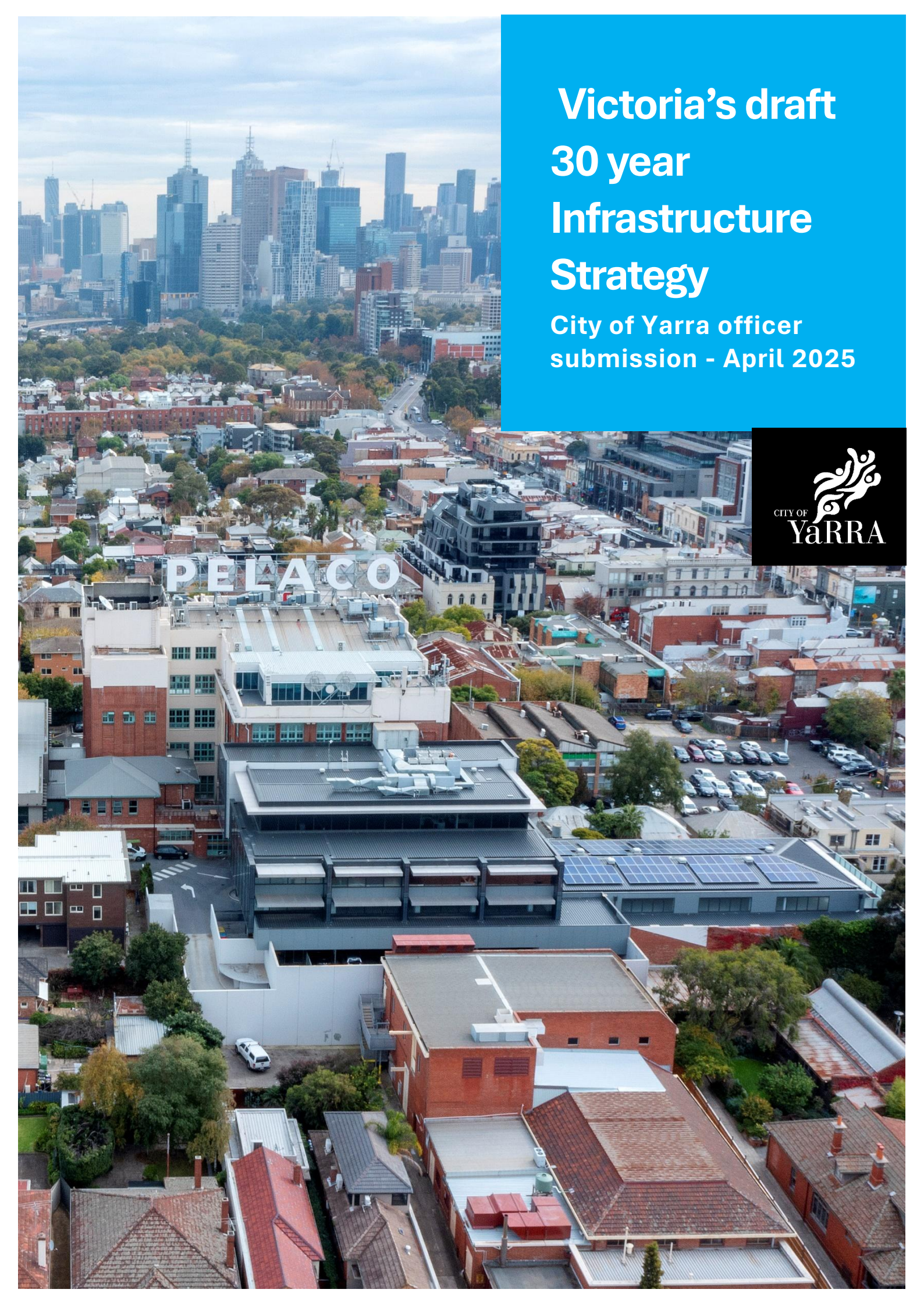
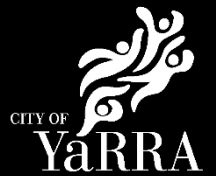




Victoria's draft 30 year Infrastructure Strategy

City of Yarra officer
submission - April 2025



PELACO

Executive summary

The City of Yarra welcomes the opportunity to comment on *Victoria's draft 30 year Infrastructure Strategy*.

The development of a comprehensive, 30-year infrastructure strategy to provide a roadmap for infrastructure planning and investment across various areas, including housing, energy, transport, and social infrastructure is crucial in maintaining and enhancing the sustainability, liveability and productivity of Victoria.

The timeframes for engagement and timing of Council meetings has meant there has been no opportunity to present the submission to Council. This submission therefore presents the views of Yarra officers only and not the Yarra City Council.

Priorities for Yarra

The objectives and many of the draft strategy's recommendations align with high level directions in Yarra's strategies and policies.

Council's submission highlights the following priorities:

- Ensure housing growth is supported by appropriate infrastructure
- Services and infrastructure meet communities' changing needs
- Manage climate risks and build climate resilient communities
- Increase the supply of social and affordable housing – i.e. a significant net gain in social (public and community) housing stock
- Increase the capacity and frequency of public transport and deliver a network of all ages and abilities bicycle and walking infrastructure
- Plan for our diverse communities
- Provide significant State investment to support infrastructure.

Ensure housing growth is supported by appropriate infrastructure

Yarra supports the focus of more homes near transport, jobs, and essential services, however significant new housing must be supported by infrastructure. This will require significant investment in:

- public open space and other public spaces
- community infrastructure
- public transport
- walking and cycling infrastructure
- climate resilience.

The forecast population growth according to Victoria in Future (VIF) 2023 is significant. The proposed capacity figure of the Housing Target is even higher. This poses significant pressure on infrastructure and service delivery.

Ensure services and infrastructure meet communities' changing needs

Infrastructure and services create socially connected communities and includes open spaces, playgrounds, libraries, community gardens, creative arts centres, gyms, sportsgrounds, aquatic centres, and other community spaces.

Alongside housing, Council will need to ensure it has the capacity and resources to accommodate and maintain this important infrastructure.

The combination of replacing or upgrading ageing infrastructure and investing in new infrastructure, alongside the demands of rapid population growth, will require significant investment in Council's asset portfolio. The potential impact of the housing targets on population growth, age structure and location make this process more complex.

Community infrastructure will need to respond to the changing nature of the inner city by providing flexible, accessible, innovative and adaptable facilities that reflect universal design and meet multiple service needs.

It is vital Councils are adequately supported to meet the community's infrastructure needs.

Manage climate risks and build climate resilient communities

To better manage increasing pressures on natural resources, higher levels of population growth, and the effects of climate change, there is a need to improve how sustainability is incorporated into how the urban environment is designed and planned.

Yarra City Council was one of the first councils to declare a climate emergency. Change is needed to rapidly reduce carbon emissions across the community and ensure homes, businesses and community infrastructure are sustainable and resilient to a changing climate.

Yarra has long advocated for stronger environmentally sustainable design controls in the planning and building process and adopted a *Climate Emergency Plan 2024-2030* as a call to action.

Officers consider the strategy should contain a strong commitment to zero emissions.

Council is also seeking to ensure communities most at-risk of climate impacts are prepared for and can cope with those impacts.

Strong policy leadership and significant financial investment is urgently needed from both the State and Federal Government to accelerate the transition to a net zero emissions economy and strengthen community resilience to climate change. The major transition ahead needs to occur in a fair and socially equitable way. The most vulnerable people have typically made the least contribution to the problem and often have less capacity to respond and cope with the impacts.

Building a climate resilient city is a key focus of the *Climate Emergency Plan*. It aims to ensure everyone in Yarra lives and works in comfortable and climate-safe homes and buildings, supported by climate resilient public spaces and infrastructure.

Increase the supply of social and affordable housing – i.e. a significant net gain in social (public and community) housing stock

Housing affordability is a key issue for Yarra. Maintaining the diversity of the municipality is critical and Council is committed to pursuing strategies that increase social and affordable housing in the municipality.

The draft strategy recognises there is an insufficient supply of affordable housing across Victoria.

Council continues to support the introduction of planning mechanisms such as inclusionary zoning into the Victoria Planning Provisions. Inclusionary zoning would require developers to supply a proportion of new developments as affordable housing. A mandatory inclusionary zoning mechanism across the State is required to ensure that an adequate amount of social (i.e. community) and affordable housing stock is being delivered, in addition to public housing stock.

Council also calls on the Victorian Government to maintain and upgrade existing public housing and substantially increase the number of public housing dwellings to address the housing affordability crisis for the lowest income households - an integral part of the Yarra community.

Increase capacity and frequency of public transport and deliver a network of all ages and abilities bicycle and walking infrastructure

The growing resident and worker population will also place further importance on changing the way people move around, with growing congestion challenges around inner metropolitan areas. It will be critical to provide for a mix of transport modes (e.g. public transport, cycling, walking and motor vehicle) for workers to enable them to efficiently access jobs and for residents and visitors to access activity centres.

The State Government must invest in new public transport services and improve existing services.

Improving cycling and pedestrian infrastructure is vital to achieving a sustainable, liveable and efficient city for people. These projects should be given a much higher priority.

Plan for diverse communities

While the draft strategy is focussed on infrastructure, it must recognise that people are the end users of infrastructure. Decisions on infrastructure must ensure a fair and equitable quality of life is possible, regardless of age, ability, ethnicity, gender or religion. It must also ensure equitable opportunities for housing and services provided to all.

Provide significant State investment to support infrastructure

Officers strongly support the role of the draft Infrastructure Strategy in setting out costed recommendations based on robust research and evidence.

The draft recommendations have many economic, social and environmental benefits. Infrastructure Victoria estimates that *'implementing all 43 draft recommendations can result in over \$155 billion worth of benefits to Victorians. But these benefits also come with a financial cost to the Victorian Government.'*

The State Government must make a strong financial commitment to funding the recommendations in the draft Strategy. There must be strong emphasis on implementation and promotion of infrastructure investment.

A comprehensive long-term framework for infrastructure supported by a short-term funding program is critical to ensure there is an integrated and aligned infrastructure delivery. This funding would:

- Ensure the State Government delivers infrastructure to support growth (including public transport, housing affordability, community service support)
- Support councils in doing their work in relation to built form, good design outcomes, public spaces, greening and climate resilience.

It will be important that the development industry contributes to the provision of infrastructure. In this regard Council supports proposals for a new development contribution system. Other funding options towards state infrastructure will also need to be considered.

1.0 Introduction

The City of Yarra welcomes the opportunity to comment on *Victoria's draft 30 year Infrastructure Strategy*.

The development of a comprehensive, 30-year infrastructure strategy to provide a roadmap for infrastructure planning and investment across various areas, including housing, energy, transport, and social infrastructure is crucial in maintaining and enhancing the sustainability, liveability and productivity of Victoria.

The timeframes for engagement and timing of Council meetings has meant there has been no opportunity to present the submission to Council. This submission therefore presents the views of Yarra officers only and not the Yarra City Council.

1.1 Approach of Council's submission

This submission provides both high-level and detailed comments, important in progressing the strategy.

Yarra has mainly commented on parts of the plan relevant to the Local Government Area (LGA). For example, few comments are provided on directions or strategies which address Victoria's rural and regional areas.

Yarra's submission is set out around the six objectives that underpin the strategy:

- *Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities*
- *Victorians are healthy and safe*
- *Victoria has a thriving natural environment*
- *Aboriginal people have self-determination and equal outcomes to other Victorians*
- *Victoria is resilient to climate change and other future risks*
- *Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy.*

Under each of these objectives, this submission:

- Identifies the 43 draft recommendations and future options that are of importance to Yarra and the inner city
- Identifies whether officers support, support with changes or do not support the draft recommendations and future options
- Includes proposed changes or additions to the draft recommendations.

Officers note that some recommendations are not applicable to Yarra or the inner city or Council does not have a specific position. This is noted where relevant.

2.0 Response to the draft recommendations

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

1 Build more social housing

Consistently invest in new social housing to provide more Victorians on low incomes with access to a secure and affordable home.

Strongly support

Yarra strongly supports draft Recommendation # 1 that recommends the Victorian Government fund a 15-year program to build around 4,000 social homes each year.

The draft strategy notes over 51,000 households were on the waiting list for social housing in June 2024. The Victorian Government's initial Big Housing Build is coming to an end after funding 9,300 new social homes. Even with this, social housing will make up only 2.8 per cent of homes in Victoria compared to a national average of 4 per cent.

Housing is a key determinant of health and wellbeing. In Yarra in 2021, 8.1 per cent of households rent from social housing providers, significantly higher than in Greater Melbourne (2.3 per cent) and Victoria (2.5 per cent). The proportion is particularly high in North Richmond (14.6 per cent), Collingwood (15.0 per cent), and Fitzroy (15.5 per cent).

Council strongly supports the need for more social housing in Yarra.

Public housing towers

At its meetings on 12 December 2023 and 9 July 2024, Council resolved to oppose the planned demolition of the 44 public housing towers across Melbourne, including the twelve towers within our municipality at the Fitzroy, Collingwood, and Richmond Estates.

Council strongly advocates for increasing public housing within the municipality to ensure that those in greatest need continue to have access to secure and affordable housing. The future of public housing must be safeguarded through clear commitments, transparent consultation, and a guarantee that redevelopment projects will not erode public housing stock.

A reduction in public housing stock would have a significant impact on our community, particularly for those experiencing housing insecurity.

While it is recognised the process around the future of the public housing towers is not the responsibility of Infrastructure Victoria, Council is concerned that more certainty, especially for public residents, is needed.

Council urges the Victorian Government to fully assess the condition and redevelopment potential of each tower before proceeding, ensuring that viable alternatives to demolition are properly considered.

Council has submitted to the recent *Inquiry into the redevelopment of Melbourne's public housing towers* that the process has:

- Relocation impacts - Low rates of return to redeveloped sites by relocated residents have been identified in previous state-run renewal projects. Not returning to redeveloped sites extends and exacerbates the consequences of displacement felt through the redevelopment cycle and specifically impacts wellbeing, health and community connections
- Health and well-being impacts - Vital programs such as the high-rise cooling program have ceased within the towers identified for demolition.
- Recently housed residents - New public housing residents, particularly those placed into permanent housing after long-term homelessness and housing insecurity, could be re-traumatised by the need to relocate.

Council has advocated for the Victorian Government to guarantee the additional 10 per cent increase in social housing that is publicly managed with rebated rent, ensuring secure, affordable tenancies for those most in need.

Council also advocates for precinct planning approaches to ensure that community services and infrastructure are equitably distributed across Yarra's public housing estates, tailored to the needs of the diverse tenant population.

Certainty of housing for those who need it most

While there is some certainty that current public housing tenants transferred to a community housing provider will remain on rebated rent, no such guarantees exist that future tenants housed in the additional 10 per cent social housing stock will be very low-income households with priority needs.

For example, across Yarra, people experience various forms and stages of homelessness, including people sleeping rough, families and young people in overcrowded or inappropriate housing, people living in our local rooming houses and women and children escaping family violence.

Securing long-term, sustainable housing outcomes for people sleeping rough is a key outcome. There needs to be considerable investment to increase the availability of public, social and affordable housing, and the provision of the necessary support to people with additional and complex needs.

In July 2023, Yarra City Council, cohealth and Launch Housing launched Yarra Zero, an evidence-driven initiative that aims to help people into permanent housing with appropriate support to achieve and sustain the Functional Zero program to solve rough sleeping homelessness.

Ample State Government-managed public housing in Yarra is essential to cater for complex clients who need to be suitably housed over the relocation and build period and into the future.

Community Housing Providers must also be supported by the Victorian Government to best service all people in need of suitable housing. This requires the Victorian Government to support Community Housing Providers to be able to draw a higher percentage of people from the VHR waiting list in any proposed public redevelopments which allow a mix of social and affordable housing.

2 Facilitate markets and invest in kindergarten infrastructure

Facilitate markets for private and not-for-profit investment in kindergarten infrastructure. Share regularly updated information about the demand for and supply of kindergarten places. Publish priorities for government investment to deliver kindergartens in communities that will have the greatest need.

Support with changes

As three-year-old kindergarten is rolled-out and Victoria's population grows, demand for both three and four-year-old kindergarten places will increase significantly. Additional capacity will be needed to meet this demand.

Yarra's kindergarten services are accommodated in a range of premises. Many of these facilities were built to different requirements such as indoor and outdoor space requirements. Going forward, given the cost of new facilities, this existing infrastructure will need to remain in use. The demand/supply projections in Yarra's *Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan* (KISP) assume that existing kindergarten infrastructure will continue to be used.

Historically, many Councils have invested in kindergarten infrastructure, however the Victorian Government's Best Start Best Life reform is placing significant pressure on Councils to maintain, upgrade, and expand this infrastructure to meet increased demand for kindergarten. The Victorian Government contributes funding to meet some of this increased demand through Building Blocks Grants and Partnership Agreements.

The recommendation to '*facilitate markets for private and not-for-profit investment in kindergarten infrastructure*' should be considered with caution. There are distinct differences between kindergarten in long day early education and care services and stand-alone kindergarten programs which must be factored into this recommendation.

Private early childhood providers are unlikely to see value in investing in stand-alone kindergarten facilities. The market is currently structured in such a way that long day early education and care services are considered valuable capital to invest in and are more profitable than stand-alone kindergarten services.

Demand for stand-alone kindergarten programs is increasing in some parts of Victoria due to the Victorian Government's "Free Kindergarten" initiative. This service is highly attractive as it is completely free – as opposed to other options that require families pay a portion of fees for their child to attend kindergarten in long day early education and care services.

Additionally, the recommendation for not-for-profit kindergarten providers to invest in infrastructure is unlikely to be financially viable for many providers who rely on access to community/Council-owned infrastructure, often at peppercorn rent or significantly reduced rent.

Education planning

Currently schools and kinder have been planned in isolation with little integrated planning. As land is a significant issue in the inner city, more integrated planning is needed across education to consider opportunities to co-locate.

The local government sector has been advocating for many years for involvement in integrated planning with the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) i.e. school planning is integrated with planning for early childhood education and care services through the *Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan* process. This is especially critical in municipalities with limited land to construct new early childhood services.

The integrated planning of schools aligns with the principles of the Victorian Government's *Kindergartens on School Sites policy* and it is strongly recommended it is prioritised and actioned urgently.

This includes the sharing of up-to-date and real-time data to support both state and local government to effectively plan together. Effective planning is currently impacted by 6 to 12 month delays in sharing municipal kindergarten profile data, and delays in local government who need to access to up-to-date *Victoria in Future* data.

Affordable early years education

Yarra has high-rise and low-rise social housing across the municipality with 8.1 per cent of residents living in social housing compared to 2.6 per cent average in Greater Melbourne. Levels of disadvantage in Yarra are highly concentrated in the main public housing areas within Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy. There are also low-rise public housing pockets in North Fitzroy and Clifton Hill. The importance of engaging children in early education in a way that is affordable is a challenge. Planning for early childhood services must be incorporated into the redevelopment of Yarra's public housing estates.

Kinder for First Peoples

A gap in the provision of kinder is for First Peoples. 1,000 places for First Peoples are needed across Victoria. Access to kinder is essential to early childhood development.

Updated recommendation

2 Facilitate markets and invest in kindergarten infrastructure

Support Facilitate markets for private and not-for-profit investment in kindergarten infrastructure. Share regularly updated information about the demand for and supply of kindergarten places. Publish priorities for government investment to deliver kindergartens in communities that will have the greatest need.

3 Plan and deliver expanded and new schools

Identify schools to expand and confirm areas that will need new schools. Fund expansions of existing schools and begin delivery of new schools. Minimise costs by expanding the built capacity of existing schools and building larger new schools.

Support

Education planning

As noted in draft recommendation #2, more integrated planning is needed across education.

Capacity

A key issue for schools in the inner city is capacity and the age of the infrastructure. Officers note:

- the St John's Primary School, Clifton Hill has recently closed
- to address overcrowding, students from University High School (outside of Yarra) have been relocated to a temporary campus in a rented office building at 399 Lonsdale Street
- The new Richmond High School was opened in 2018, filling a much needed gap after its closure in 1992.

Updated recommendation

3 Plan and deliver expanded and new schools

Identify schools to expand and confirm areas that will need new schools. Fund expansions of existing schools and begin delivery of new schools. Minimise costs by expanding the built capacity of existing schools and building larger new schools. Better integrate planning for schools to explore opportunities for the co-location of kindergarten facilities.

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

Expand TAFE campuses in Melbourne's west, north and south-east growth areas, and some large regional centres, to train more students to fill skills gaps, especially in construction, energy and health.

Support

Yarra officers support the need for additional education opportunities.

5 Build libraries and aquatic centres for Melbourne's growing communities

Fund councils to plan and build libraries and aquatic recreation centres in Melbourne's growth areas.

Partially support

Public libraries provide a community with a cultural focal point. They provide respectful, supportive and safe places where people can come together to participate in events and programs, express themselves creatively or simply just sit and 'be' with other people. They assist with social cohesion and cross-cultural understanding through enhancing positive social interaction. This can be of value to all members of the community but may be particularly important for vulnerable members of the community.

Libraries and aquatic centres are key community infrastructure within Yarra. Yarra has significantly ageing infrastructure, specifically libraries. Many of Yarra's libraries are located in heritage assets, aged building and pre-date the Building Code. Substantial uplift is needed to meet modern standards and meet changing community needs.

The need for modern 'fit for purpose' libraries that fulfil a number of roles is not just an issue in the Melbourne's growth areas. This has significant cost implications.

Officers also note the high cost of maintaining aquatic centres.

While contributions from State Government towards operational funding for libraries have not increased for many years, we welcome the contributions towards building new library infrastructure outlined in the draft strategy. We recommend the cost estimates towards library and aquatic centres be articulated to clarify how much funding will be allocated towards each category.

Libraries are part of the suite of community infrastructure that require funding and support (see also additional recommendation on community hubs).

Updated recommendation

5 Build libraries and aquatic centres for Melbourne's growing communities

Fund councils to plan and build libraries and aquatic recreation centres in Melbourne's growth areas. Clearly articulate the funding allocation for libraries and aquatic centres. Support libraries as part of a suite of community infrastructure in inner city areas.

6 Make government infrastructure more accessible

Complete priority public transport stop upgrades to meet legal accessibility requirements and fund further upgrades. Provide better public information on accessibility in government buildings.

Support

Accessible public transport

Officers strongly support the continued roll-out of accessible public transport.

Council considers the State should immediately commit to the provision, design and management of Disability Discrimination Act compliant tram stops and surrounding area upgrades to the Fitzroy Gasworks, Brunswick Street, Gertrude Street, Bridge Road and Church Street tram stops.

As part of the roll out of accessible public transport stops, it is also important to ensure the surrounding pedestrian area is improved in terms of accessibility, amenity etc.

Making infrastructure, facilities, and amenities more accessible

Providing better public information on accessibility in government buildings is supported, however more should be done to make infrastructure, facilities, and amenities more accessible.

Council's *Access and Inclusion Plan* identifies a number of opportunities that should be pursued:

- Incentivise local businesses to be more accessible
- Improve public areas by increasing safety and accessibility
- Advocate and work collaboratively to create and maintain accessible and affordable housing.
- Advocate for the provision of Changing Places facilities.

Updated recommendation

6 Make government infrastructure more accessible

Complete priority public transport stop upgrades to meet legal accessibility requirements and fund further upgrades. Provide better public information on accessibility in government buildings. Make infrastructure, facilities, and amenities more accessible.

7 Rezone locations near existing infrastructure for more home choices

Change all relevant planning schemes to rezone for more homes in Victoria's cities and reach housing targets. More homes should be close to public transport and open space, with good access to services.

Support in principle with changes

Accommodating housing growth

Officers support the principle of more homes close to public transport, open space and services.

The strategic directions set out in the Yarra Planning Scheme identify activity centres as primary locations for economic activity, housing, leisure and recreation, tourism, the arts and culture.

Activity centres are a focus of growth in Yarra and will continue to accommodate most of the city's growth because of their proximity to transport infrastructure, shops and services making them the most suitable locations for development.

Plan for Victoria identifies a housing target of 44,000 additional dwellings by 2051 (measured from mid 2023) to Yarra.

There are number of unknowns in terms of the housing targets:

- The capacity model that informed the Housing Targets has not yet been provided to Councils to enable an assessment of the areas identified for growth in Yarra Planning Scheme and our ability to meet the housing targets. (Noting Council capacity analysis has identified good capacity in our activity centres.)
- The *Plan for Victoria* also identifies the whole of Yarra as an 'activity centre'. The plan notes that in collaboration with local government, the State Government will identify specific opportunities for strategic redevelopment sites. Richmond has also been identified as a priority precinct.
- A series of zones and overlays have been rolled out by the State Government to facilitate housing growth. It is unclear whether changes to the planning scheme are required.

Officers are seeking further information from the Department of Transport and Planning around the housing targets and the model.

Retaining employment areas

A key challenge for inner urban areas like Yarra is the ongoing need to balance housing development with employment uses. The retention of employment land is critical to ensure employment opportunities are retained close to where people live and close to multiple transport options. It ensures the basic functioning of a city and makes it attractive for people and businesses.

Rezoning of employment precincts (or parts thereof) would encourage residential development in less desirable locations, lead to an irretrievable loss of employment land and is not likely to lead to an overall increase in total dwellings.

The strategy needs to be clear that employment land should not be rezoned to allow residential development unless a comprehensive, municipal analysis identifies it as surplus and it is in a suitable location.

Updated recommendation

7 Rezone locations near existing infrastructure for more home choices

Change all relevant planning schemes to rezone for more homes in Victoria's cities and reach housing targets. More homes should be close to public transport and open space, with good access to services. Retain key employment land.

Future option

Mandate more affordable homes near existing infrastructure

Choose a mechanism to mandate more housing that is affordable for low-income households and close to public transport, open space and services.

Support with changes

Officers strongly support the need to mandate affordable housing, however, consider this should be a recommendation that must be actioned as a matter of priority rather than a future option.

Council understands that one of the drivers of the housing targets is the premise that more homes will mean they are more affordable. Capacity in the planning scheme alone is not the answer to affordability.

The strong demand to live in Yarra has resulted in rapid house price growth and high land values in the past decade. The high purchase prices in Yarra (the median house price in 2024 was approximately \$1.37 million with units at \$567,000) mean that many households are unable to purchase property in Yarra, especially lower income households. While renting for many households is more viable than purchasing a home, the cost of renting in Yarra is still cost prohibitive for many households.

The planning system plays a proactive role on the ‘supply’ side however the planning system is ultimately a lesser influence on prices.

The Victorian Government’s series of social and affordable housing legislative reforms, policy initiatives and new investments are still not addressing the social (including public) and affordable housing deficit. Similarly, Federal Government initiatives and other State Government programs, such as home buyer assistance and shared equity schemes, assist but will not provide a comprehensive solution.

Yarra, together with the other M9 Councils, are seeking the introduction of mandatory affordable housing controls in the Victorian Planning System to deliver social and affordable housing with certainty and at scale to ensure long-term socio-demographic mix and complement the public housing program.

Social and affordable housing is essential infrastructure that needs to be planned for and provided in a similar way to roads, parks and open space, drainage works are provided via contributions from development as cities grow and densify.

Updated recommendation

Future option Recommendation	Mandate more affordable homes near existing infrastructure As a matter of priority, choose to implement a mechanism to mandate more housing that is affordable for low-income households and close to public transport, open space and services.
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Future option	Phase out residential stamp duties Over the long term, phase out residential stamp duties and phase in residential land tax.
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Yarra has no specific position on this matter

# 8	Extend Melbourne's trams to encourage more new homes nearby Increase services on key tram routes in activity centres that have been designated for additional housing development. Complete a detailed assessment of tram extensions in Melbourne’s established suburbs. Start building extensions in areas that can support more new homes. Rezone land around the extended tram lines so more homes are built.
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Support with changes

Yarra officers strongly support the focus of the strategy on public transport.

Yarra has some of the best public transport access of any municipality in Victoria. However, there are still significant challenges and issues to be addressed to meet current and future needs. Transport demands in the inner city, particularly public transport, are expected to greatly increase due to the anticipated increase in residents and workers.

It is also important to note that public transport trips translate into walking trips once residents and workers alight from public transport.

Increasing public transport capacity, priority and stop/station access can require road space reallocation away from cars and traffic. It can also be expensive and relies on sustained State Government planning and funding as the responsible authority.

Council is seeking to work with the State Government, neighbouring councils and operators as key stakeholders on public transport and ancillary projects in Yarra to encourage investment in new public transport services and improvements to existing services:

- increase the frequency and reliability of trains, trams and buses
- improve public transport options for the community in off-peak periods and on weekends
- increase accessibility and reduce door-to-door journey times
- provide new and improved interchange opportunities in Yarra
- reduce pressure on the central city for interchange particularly during peak times
- increase capacity generally and redistribute demand to relieve pressure on the Hoddle Grid
- improve network resilience (in the event of planned system maintenance, an upgrade, incident or an extreme weather event)
- support public transport improvements to existing and potential urban strategic renewal precincts
- facilitate transition to electric on-road public transport fleets
- facilitate the provision of larger and DDA-compliant low floor trams
- make all public transport vehicle, stop and station infrastructure fully DDA-compliant and accessible to all.

(See also a new recommendation to develop an inner city transport plan.)

Tram upgrades

A key issue for tram services in the inner city is reliability. The draft recommendation should also include the continued development of priority lanes for trams to enhance the reliability of services.

Yarra's *Transport Strategy* identifies additional tram route upgrades and new services, including:

- extend Church Street trams to North Richmond Station or Victoria Gardens Shopping Centre
- run more trams to provide more capacity on busy route sections such as Bridge Road.

These changes should be considered by Infrastructure Victoria.

Updated recommendation

8 Extend and increase the reliability and capacity of Melbourne's trams to encourage more new homes nearby

Increase services on key tram routes in activity centres that have been designated for additional housing development and give trams priority on the road. Complete a detailed assessment of tram extensions in Melbourne's established suburbs. Start building extensions in areas that can support more new homes. Rezone land around the extended tram lines so more homes are built.

9 Run faster bus services, more often, in Victoria's largest cities

Run buses more often, for longer hours, and give buses priority on the road. In stages, straighten out existing bus routes so they are fast and direct.

Support

See response to draft Recommendations # 8 and # 10.

10 Build a new bus rapid transit network

Complete a detailed assessment, reserve the required land, and build a new bus rapid transit network. Start with routes that connect train stations and busy destinations in Melbourne's north, west, and south-east, and extend the new Eastern Busway along Hoddle Street.

Support

See response to draft Recommendation #8 regarding the need to enhance public transport infrastructure in the inner city.

Eastern busway

The Eastern Busway, 11kms along the Eastern Freeway between Doncaster Road and Hoddle Street, will be built as part of the major overhaul of the Eastern Freeway and will be opened in 2028 with North East Link and the upgraded Eastern Freeway. Work to build Doncaster Road to Burke Street is currently underway.

Yarra supports the extension of the new eastern busway along Hoddle Street to provide a high-quality link into the CBD. The Yarra's *Transport Strategy 2022-32* suggests two options for the connection to the CBD via Victoria Parade or Alexandra Parade.

Other bus upgrades

Yarra's *Transport Strategy* also identifies additional bus route upgrades and new services, including:

- upgrade bus route 246 and extend it to Moonee Ponds
- upgrade bus route 546 to improve frequency and service span
- introduce a new bus service between the former Alphington Paper Mill site and Burnley Station via the Chandler Highway Bridge
- introduce a new bus service between Burnley Station and Elsternwick.

These changes should be considered by Infrastructure Victoria.

11 Extend metropolitan trains and run more services in Melbourne's west

Extend and electrify metropolitan trains to Melton. Reallocate trains that serve Melton to other areas in Melbourne's west and regional Victoria. Assess delivery of a new train station at Altona North accompanied by land rezoning.

Support with changes

While Yarra is relatively well serviced by several key train lines and stations, Yarra's *Transport Strategy 2022-32* identifies the following opportunities:

- construct Melbourne Metro 2 with at least one new station in Fitzroy North/Carlton North
- upgrade Clifton Hill junction
- remove the Madden Grove level crossing in Burnley
- upgrade interpeak, weekend and evening train services on the Clifton Hill Group to run every 10 minutes or better (per line)
- upgrade interpeak and evening train services on the Lilydale/Belgrave/ Alamein and Glen Waverley Lines to run every 10 minutes or better
- introduce high-capacity trains on the Clifton Hill and Burnley Group train lines.

These changes should be considered by Infrastructure Victoria.

Updated recommendation

11 Extend metropolitan trains and run more services in Melbourne's west

Extend and electrify metropolitan trains to Melton. Reallocate trains that serve Melton to other areas in Melbourne's west and regional Victoria. Assess delivery of a new train station at Altona North accompanied by land rezoning. Upgrade the Clifton Hill Junction and increase the frequency of services to the east.

12 Run more bus and coach services in regional Victoria

Deliver more bus services in regional cities. Run more V/Line coach services to better connect small towns to regional cities. Start with routes that improve access to jobs, education and healthcare.

Yarra has no specific position on this matter

13 Make off-peak public transport cheaper and simplify regional fare zones

After upgrading the myki ticketing system, charge lower fares for off-peak travel on Victoria's buses, trains and trams. Simplify fares and reduce the number of regional fare zones.

Not support

Yarra officers do not support off-peak fares. There is no evidence this would benefit the system. It would also make the fare system overly complex. However, officers consider making shorter trips more affordable would be a valuable change.

Updated recommendation

13 ~~Make off-peak~~ short trips on public transport cheaper and simplify regional fare zones

After upgrading the myki ticketing system, charge lower fares for ~~off-peak travel~~ short trips on Victoria's buses, trains and trams. Simplify fares and reduce the number of regional fare zones.

2.2 Victorians are healthy and safe

14 Make local streets safer for children and communities

Reduce speed limits to 30km/h on local streets, starting in places that children often visit including around schools, playgrounds, childcare centres and kindergartens.

Support

Officers strongly support draft Recommendation # 14. Lower speed limits and lower actual vehicle speeds improve safety and amenity for all, particularly for vulnerable road users. Lower speeds also allow roads to be designed in a more compact way creating opportunities for more shared space, trees, trading space for businesses and bike infrastructure. Reduced traffic speeds are supported, including reduced speed limits.

Yarra has led the implementation of 40km/h speed limits in all areas and supports the introduction of safer 30km/h speed limits and lower speed shared zones in line with best practice around the world.

Council is trialling 30km/h in Collingwood and Fitzroy. The support from experts and the community, coupled with evidence-backed safety improvements, reinforces the need to progress this initiative and expand its coverage. The formalisation of the current trial is contingent upon a review of the Speed Zoning Policy, aiming to establish a standard 30 km/h limit on Victorian streets.

It is noted this proposal in the strategy would apply to local and not arterial roads. Officers consider there are circumstances where lower speed limits on arterial roads should be considered.

A review of the current Speed Zoning Policy to allow the introduction of 30 km/h speed limit on permanent basis is required.

15 Build safe cycling networks in Melbourne and regional cities

Continue building protected and connected cycle corridors across Victoria. Publish updates to the strategic cycling corridor network.

Strongly support

Improving cycling and pedestrian infrastructure is vital to achieving a sustainable, liveable and efficient city for people and therefore the completion of these projects should be given a much higher priority.

Council is aiming to make Yarra a place where everyone can ride, walk or cycle to their destination, through an integrated network of best practice bike lanes, improved footpaths and support for level access tram stops. This must be translated across Melbourne and Victoria via a comprehensive increase and upgraded walking infrastructure (i.e. footpaths, crossings) and the implementation of strategic cycling corridors, both to and within Yarra.

Local, national and international experience and research show that a connected 'grid' of direct and safe cycling routes is essential to increasing bicycle mode share. This will be important to help relieve public transport and road congestion for shorter to mid-range trips as the population (worker and resident) is set to increase significantly.

While Yarra does have some high-quality routes, safe connections between them are limited. This means that the benefits of our cycling investment cannot be fully realised as people are unable to safely get to them. To be a true alternative, routes must be connected and fit for all ages and abilities.

The implementation of this recommendation will require strong commitment from the Department of Transport, public transport providers and other government agencies.

16 Help government schools share their grounds

Prioritise which government school sports fields and facilities could deliver the greatest benefits if they were shared with local communities outside school hours. Give these schools extra help for maintenance if they voluntarily share their grounds outside school hours. Offer funding for upgrades to incentivise shared access outside school hours.

Support with changes

Officers support draft Recommendation # 16.

Increased access to open spaces is essential for liveable communities. Access to school grounds can offer an additional open space resource – especially where access to public open space is limited. (See additional recommendation around public open space below).

The draft recommendation should also be broadened to support the wider use of all schools.

Use of buildings and other facilities

'Sweating the assets' (i.e. increasing the utilisation of existing structures and spending low extra or marginal costs) is critical in infrastructure provision.

Draft recommendation # 16 should be expanded to provide for the use of other school facilities e.g. school auditoriums. Councils are pressured to lease space at very minimal rates. Others could help share the burden of affordable access to good infrastructure.

A specific opportunity is to support the use of school facilities by creative and cultural uses during school holidays and outside school hours. There is no ongoing funding for cultural infrastructure and pipeline of work needs to be invested in. Schools often have sophisticated technical facilities such as sound systems or art spaces that could be utilised.

Officers also suggest the strategy reference the use of smart technologies to leverage access to buildings. Four Council libraries include Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library allows open library members to access the library during un-serviced hours, every day of the week.

Play spaces

The addition of play spaces to the recommendation is also suggested to help service gap areas.

Updated recommendation

16 Help government schools share their grounds and facilities.

~~Prioritise which~~ Support the shared use of government school sports fields, play spaces and other facilities ~~could to deliver the greatest benefits if they were shared~~ with local communities outside school hours. Give these schools extra help for maintenance if they voluntarily share their grounds outside school hours. Offer funding for upgrades to incentivise shared access outside school hours.

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

Develop and fund 5-year priorities for Victorian Government investment in community health facilities.

Strongly support

Yarra officers strongly support the funding of community health facilities.

There are three community health facilities within Yarra - North Richmond Community Health, cohealth and Access Health and Community (providing amongst other services, an urgent, non-emergency care).

These facilities are essential primary health providers for the Yarra community. They provide general practitioner and allied health to communities who rely on bulk billing; supporting the approximately 8 per cent of the Yarra population who live in social / public housing and 25 per cent of the population who access a Commonwealth concession card.

18 Build more residential alcohol and other drug treatment facilities

Plan and start building residential rehabilitation and withdrawal facilities to meet the demand for alcohol and other drug treatment.

Support

Council officers support the provision of increased facilities for alcohol and drug treatment. One of the six themes in Council's *Health and Well-being Plan (2021-25)* is 'Assisting to reduce the harms from tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs and gambling'.

Alcohol and other drugs (AOD) have significant health, social and economic impacts in communities, and are a major risk factor for preventable disease, illness and death.

There is a very high rate of risky drinking behaviour in Yarra, with 20 per cent of residents at a lifetime risk of alcohol-related harm. There is also a high level of drug related offenses in Yarra. In Yarra, there are high rates of AOD-related social harms and AOD-related health service use, but these are similar to rates seen in other inner-city areas with nighttime economies.

19 Invest in digital healthcare

Expand digital healthcare to improve the quality of care and ease demand on public hospitals. Deliver a statewide medical image sharing system and a statewide virtual care service that remotely monitors suitable patients at home.

Support

Yarra officers support expanded health options but note there is a critical need to support vulnerable and marginalised communities to access and use of digital technology.

Council works in close collaboration with various partners at the local, State and Federal level to support, facilitate and advocate for increased digital literacy in the community.

Updated recommendation

19 Invest in digital healthcare

Expand digital healthcare to improve the quality of care and ease demand on public hospitals. Deliver a statewide medical image sharing system and a statewide virtual care service that remotely monitors suitable patients at home. Support digital literacy to ensure the State's vulnerable and marginalised communities can access digital health care.

20 Upgrade critical public hospital infrastructure

Define the scope and timeframes to upgrade the Royal Melbourne Hospital and begin the first stage of construction. Continue with upgrades at the Alfred and Austin hospitals.

Yarra has no specific position on this matter

21 Better use prisons and invest more in health facilities and transition housing

Use prison capacity to move people to facilities that meet their needs. Invest more in prison health facilities and post-release transition housing. Close old prisons that are underused and expensive to keep.

Yarra has no specific position on this matter

Gaps / additional recommendations

Gap (new) Support and fund development of community hubs

Support the development of multi-purpose, flexible and adaptable community hubs throughout Victoria.

A gap in the strategy is support for community hubs. Community hubs provide integrated community facilities in one location to provide better access to a wide range of services in a more cost effective way.

Yarra is seeking support for the creation of community hubs throughout the municipality, however a particular need is the provision of a community hub in North Richmond.

The 2022 draft North Richmond Master Plan (which was developed for the Richmond public housing estate) included 23,000 square metres of community, commercial and other local services – spread throughout the proposed redevelopment.

Council supported the inclusion of the community spaces with a preference for the provision of a multi-purpose community hub within the North Richmond area to cater for a broader range of uses, as opposed to a number of disparate spaces.

Council worked with State Government on the preparation of the masterplan for the renewal of the North Richmond Housing Estate. However, no further update has been received since the announcement to demolish all public housing across Melbourne

Council is now beginning work on the development of the *Victoria Street Revitalisation Plan: Enhancing Amenity, Boosting the Economy, and Fostering Local Pride*, as a locally led initiative aimed at delivering short, medium, and long-term targeted interventions in partnership with residents, businesses, and private and public sector stakeholders.

This project provides an ideal opportunity for the State Government to work with Council to deliver the much needed community hub for North Richmond residents.

**Gap
(new)**

Support and fund the development of community spaces

Provide community meeting spaces that provide opportunities for communities to meet and celebrate. Ensure these spaces are physically accessible and welcoming to people of all abilities, linguistic, cultural backgrounds and age groups.

Social isolation is a growing issue. Medium and high density environments are increasing the need for community gathering spaces. The desire is for community spaces that are not part of a commercial premise such as a café or pub and are provided at no or low cost.

Community spaces allow people to come together to connect and build relationships through leisure, social, or educational activities. In particular, there is a need to provide spaces for Yarra's diverse cultures and LGTQIA+ communities.

These spaces should be safe and accessible for all and welcoming to people of all abilities, linguistic, cultural backgrounds, genders and age groups.

They can also provide places of refuge when heat waves and other climate events occur.

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

22

Invest in secure homes for Aboriginal Victorians

Fund a 10-year program to build social homes for Aboriginal Victorians and provide secure and sustainable tenancies. Work with Aboriginal housing providers and Traditional Owner corporations to develop capacity across the Aboriginal housing and homelessness sector.

Support

The recommendations in the draft strategy references Traditional Owners. This is important in relation to land-based permissions and other issues concerning cultural heritage and land. However, Traditional Owners do not generally have a broader service remit. This is the realm of the Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisation (ACCO) sector.

Many providers of Aboriginal housing are mainstream providers and are not ACCOs. There is a role for the Victorian Government to work more with ACCOs to support delivery of housing outcomes that are responsive to First People's needs and also align with ACCO service provision.

In terms of housing, community housing providers are largely selling off properties in expensive inner-city areas such as Yarra, that are well located for transport and services, in favour of outer areas where land, properties and the cost of building are cheaper.

For example, it is understood that Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV), no longer owns any housing stock in Yarra, despite their offices being based in North Fitzroy.

Community members and service providers are pushed further out. This trend will continue without substantial support to create more social and affordable housing options in the inner city for First Peoples and avoid the growing geographical socio-economic divide in Victoria.

Updated recommendation

22 Invest in secure homes for Aboriginal Victorians

Fund a 10-year program to build social homes for Aboriginal Victorians and provide secure and sustainable tenancies. Work with Aboriginal housing providers, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and Traditional Owner corporations to develop capacity across the Aboriginal housing and homelessness sector.

23 Fund better health and wellbeing infrastructure for Aboriginal Victorians

Fund and start health and wellbeing infrastructure projects for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). Provide additional annual funding to further develop the skills and capacity of health and wellbeing ACCOs to plan, develop and deliver new and upgraded infrastructure in a self-determined way. Establish an interim fund for minor works and repairs until a self-determined perpetual infrastructure fund is introduced.

Support

Much of the existing infrastructure for the Aboriginal community, particularly health and well-being services, are outdated and require substantial investment. Funding is also complicated by the fact also that the ACCOs delivering services may not be on the title as the property owner.

There is not enough fit for purpose health and well-being infrastructure currently available to communities. The scale and size of repairs required by many services, combined with the complexity and timeframes in delivering new infrastructure, necessitate funding to bring existing older infrastructure up to a level that is fit for purpose.

2.4 Victoria has a thriving natural environment

24 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from infrastructure

Adopt carbon values and measure carbon in infrastructure projects to reduce emissions.

Strongly support

Officers support draft Recommendation # 24 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from infrastructure.

However, it should be strengthened by setting targets and articulating clearer pathways for reducing emissions from both government infrastructure and the sector more broadly.

Given the high percentage of emissions from infrastructure, this would set a strong policy signal in the context of Victoria's overarching emissions targets.

Zero net emissions

Officers consider the strategy should reflect a strong commitment to zero emissions. The State Government's net zero target was brought forward to 2045, along with a 95 per cent renewable energy target for 2035.

Council's *Climate Emergency Plan* includes a net zero target of 2035. This should be reflected wherever possible in the draft strategy.

While this transition has an upfront cost, efforts to transition towards a zero emissions society provide a range of benefits, including improvements to health and wellbeing, economic opportunities, and the potential to minimise existing inequities and disadvantages.

Low carbon

The draft strategy recognises that Government procurement practices need to be updated to increase the adoption of low-carbon materials. This is supported.

However, there is an opportunity to:

- introduce specific targets and timelines within government procurement to use low-carbon materials
- measure and report on the embodied carbon in materials and emissions of infrastructure developments.

In NSW, carbon emissions are an important consideration when developing and assessing government investment proposals.

The NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines set out the *NSW Government Investment Framework* requirements on carbon emissions. It also sets out the carbon values that NSW Government agencies must use when valuing carbon emission impacts in cost-benefit analysis.

The carbon values are aimed at helping government agencies make more effective and efficient decisions with respect to the carbon emission impacts of initiatives. They do not impact on the price of goods and services or impose additional costs on households.

25 Advance integrated water management and use more recycled water

Work with partners to fund and deliver integrated water management projects. Determine the costs and benefits of introducing recycled drinking water in Melbourne and Geelong and build a pilot recycled drinking water facility. Deliver a community education campaign on the need for more water sources.

Support with changes

Officers support draft Recommendation # 25 to integrate water management and use fit for purpose water, including recycled water and stormwater.

Council considers the strategy must take a whole of water cycle approach that will improve water quality, reduce the impacts of stormwater inundation, utilise stormwater and protect key water assets.

Council adopted its *Integrated Water Management Plan 2020-2030* in 2020. Its vision is to create 'A water wise city in a healthy urban environment'.

Collaboration across government and agencies will be important in delivery of integrated water management outcomes.

Rainwater reuse

A comprehensive approach to integrated water management will also require demand management and rainwater re-use.

Officers understand changes to planning provisions have removed the existing requirements around rainwater tanks. The Victorian Government should require:

- rainwater tanks for residential development through the plumbing and building regulations
- more efficient water fixtures and increase minimum water standards for appliances.

Updated recommendation

25 Advance integrated water management and use more rain and recycled water

Work with partners to fund and deliver integrated water management projects. Determine the costs and benefits of introducing recycled drinking water in Melbourne and Geelong and build a pilot recycled drinking water facility. Deliver a community education campaign on the need for more water sources.

Future option	Plan for and invest in manufactured water Plan for and invest in manufactured water. Return more water to Traditional Owners and the environment.
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Support

Officers support returning more water to Traditional Owners and the environment.

# 26	Better use government land for open space and greenery Fund actions to better connect open spaces to each other and plant more trees and shrubs in urban areas. Give Victorians access to more public land in fast growing suburbs. Target at least 30% tree canopy and shrub cover on public land.
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Support

See also the additional recommendation around public open space.

The focus on Government land, while supported, will require improved coordination and processes. Council has experienced difficulties in utilising public land due to the complexity of land ownership and requirements for maintenance.

Officers suggest the recommendation should be broadened to cover a wide variety of Government land.

Tree canopy

Draft recommendation # 26 around open space connectivity and improved canopy cover is important for community climate resilience.

Officers strongly support the implementation of a tree canopy standard but note various standards are proposed across different documents:

- The draft strategy proposes a minimum 30 per cent tree canopy and shrub cover on public land.
- Yarra's *Urban Forest Strategy* seeks to increase tree canopy cover in Yarra by 25 per cent (from 2014 levels) by 2040. This represents an increase from 17 per cent to 21.25 per cent total canopy cover across the municipality.
- *Plan for Victoria* proposes the application of a 30 per cent canopy target (to public and private land). It will rely on different responses in different areas to achieve this.

Further work / research is required to firm up a tree canopy requirement(s). It is also noted the recommendation proposes the inclusion of shrubs. Tree canopy requirements generally exclude shrubs.

Officers suggest Infrastructure Victoria could also consider the concept of '3/30/300' – three trees, 30 per cent canopy cover and live not more than 300m from open space.

Open space will be important to achieve canopy targets. However private land must also deliver canopy cover. Increased housing density and higher site coverage, limit space for large canopy trees on private land.

Recent changes to the planning scheme require canopy trees for townhouse developments. However, it is unclear how achievable this is and whether the provisions will substantially increase the tree canopy. It is also noted infrastructure in road reserves can limit tree planting and growth.

Additional funding could be provided to support greening on public land, where feasible.

Updated recommendation

# 26	Better use <u>all types of</u> government land for open space and greenery Fund actions to better connect open spaces to each other and plant more trees and shrubs in urban areas. Give Victorians access to more public land in fast growing suburbs <u>and inner areas</u> . Target at least 30% tree canopy and shrub cover on public land.
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Gaps / additional recommendations

New (Gap)	Provide open space within easy walking distance of everyone Increase availability and diversify use of open spaces to address existing shortages and respond to population growth. Connect gaps in the open space network. Provide access to nature. Support open spaces as places for refuge during extreme weather.
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As an established inner urban municipality, the City of Yarra is experiencing significant change and growth. Yet there are areas of the city where the community does not have open space within adequate walking distance of where they live or work.

85 per cent of Yarra's population live in medium and high-density dwellings compared to 33 per cent in Greater Melbourne (*Yarra Open Space Strategy*, 2020). This means that residents have less private open space available to them, increasing their reliance on public open space.

Yarra's worker population is also growing. Surveys undertaken for the Open Space Strategy found that more than 80 per cent of workers visit public open spaces during the day. Former industrial areas such as fast-growing Cremorne and parts of Collingwood historically have little public open space. With increased numbers of people working and living in or near these former industrial precincts there is a need to provide new areas of public open space.

Increased heat island

Open space is also needed to offset the impacts of increased urban heat, which is exacerbated by higher density development. The recommendation could also support open spaces as places for refuge during extreme weather through the provision of tree shade, access to drinking fountains etc.

Filling the gaps in trails and networks

There is a need to connect the gaps in trails / network such as along the Yarra River to support outdoor life, active recreation and connection to nature.

New ways of creating open space

Yarra's high density environment means that the quality of its places and spaces are critical to demonstrating that balancing growth with community needs can be achieved successfully. Given the value of land in Yarra and its historic, fine grain subdivision pattern, upgrading and expanding existing open space is one practical and economical approach to providing better quality, multi-purpose open spaces. Another necessary approach is to identify opportunities to repurpose existing public land, such as easements and roads as part of the open space network.

Yarra is investigating how existing public land can be repurposed into open space. This includes road closures to create or expand open space. Council's Roads to Parks program has recently created new open spaces in Collingwood such as Otter Street Pock Park and the expansion of Cambridge Reserve. Council is also reliant on the use or acquisition of State Government land.

2.5 Victoria is resilient to climate change and other future risks

# 27	Better prepare infrastructure for climate change Fund high-priority, cost-effective infrastructure adaptation actions when climate adaptation action plans are updated in 2026. Produce an energy sector adaptation plan.
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Strongly support

Yarra officers strongly support draft Recommendation # 27 increasing funding for adaptation actions. Adaptation has significant financial impacts that will grow over time. It is a key State and Federal Government responsibility that should not be devolved to individual households.

Officers consider the recommendation should not apply solely to large scale infrastructure and major projections. The State Government must work with work with local government.

Implementing this recommendation would assist local government's adaptation initiatives.

28 Use new flood maps to revise planning schemes

Produce a common set of flood projections based on the latest climate data. Use this information to update flood studies and maps and apply them in planning schemes. Minimise building in areas at high risk of flooding.

Support (see below for an additional recommendation)

Council has prepared updated flood mapping based on current best practice standards. It is anticipated a planning scheme amendment process will be undertaken in the future.

Where planning deals with climate adaptation, and data which is frequently updated (for instance for flooding and inundation, bushfire risk and sea level rise), there needs to be an abbreviated pathway for regulatory bodies to regularly and quickly update the data which is relied on for decision making. The current standard planning scheme amendment process does not enable this.

The State Government should step in to lead a coordinated and regular updating of flood controls across the State. This would address the issue of flooding being a bigger issue that crosses municipal boundaries and authority responsibilities. Alternatively, the State Government could support councils and water authorities such as Melbourne Water by considering introducing alternative regulatory mechanisms outside the planning regime, for the consideration of latest climate data in decisions.

29 Coordinate faster delivery of key energy infrastructure

Fast-track key energy projects and coordinate enabling infrastructure. Establish a unified energy transition project pipeline and conduct annual progress assessments. Create a central energy transition coordinator to align priorities, improve transparency and manage risks.

Support

Officers support draft Recommendation # 29 prioritising the coordinated and fast-tracked delivery of key energy projects. However, this should not come at the expense of community engagement.

30 Improve environmental assessments and site selection for energy projects

Reform environmental assessments and help energy project proponents select good sites.

Support

Wherever possible infrastructure projects should be 'nature positive'.

31 Invest in home, neighbourhood and big batteries for more energy storage

Create new support for home batteries and provide incentives to encourage people to join a virtual power plant. Expand the neighbourhood batteries program, or similar. Facilitate more investment in big batteries for the transmission network.

Support

Officers support draft recommendation # 31 and the need more battery storage at all different levels.

However, we note investment in batteries is outside the ability of most households, even with a 30 per cent rebate. Additional schemes to make this a more affordable option are required.

Officers encourage the inclusion of strategies and actions on distributed and integrated energy systems (such as local renewable energy generation, networks, storage and integration of electric vehicle charging). The strategy should support new and innovative systems and opportunities such as virtual powerplants, solar farms and neighbourhood batteries.

32 Determine long duration energy storage needs

Determine the most efficient policy or investment options to provide enough long duration energy storage to meet Victoria's needs.

Support

See response to draft Recommendation # 31.

33 Develop regional energy plans, guide transition from fossil gas and maintain reliable gas supply

Develop an energy plan for electrification and gas use that meets each region's needs and prepare gas infrastructure decommissioning for homes and some businesses. Secure gas supplies to meet demand. Set a renewable gas target and support renewable gas production.

Partially support

Council's *Climate Emergency Plan* is clear about the need to transition off fossil gas. Council does not support the continued use of gas. Fossil gas use has remained steady given Victoria's high reliance on gas which has historically been a cheap and abundant source of energy.

To reduce emissions, we must rapidly reduce energy consumption and accelerate the transition to all-electric homes, businesses, industry, and transport. This will allow the community's energy needs to be fully met through renewable electricity generation and distribution, such that legacy fossil gas systems can be removed. This must be a major focus across the community, industry, and from all levels of government.

Officers urge the State Government to fast track and strengthen the *Gas Substitution Roadmap* to phase out the use of fossil gas. Officers support the development of regional energy plans guiding the transition from gas.

Officers note that last year the State Government made changes to planning schemes across Victoria, requiring that planning permits for new homes and residential subdivisions can only connect to all electric networks. The State Government also announced all new public buildings that have not reached design stage will be all electric.

34 Speed up household energy efficiency and electrification

Require efficient electric space heating and hot water when people replace their heaters at end-of-life and support low-income households to go all-electric. Complete social housing energy upgrades, including electrification. Require Victorian homeowners to disclose the energy efficiency of their homes at the time of sale or lease.

Support with changes

Officers strongly support draft Recommendation # 34 and the Strategy's focus on the electrification of residential and commercial buildings and increasing support for low-income households and social housing to ensure an equitable clean energy transition.

The proposed introduction of mandatory disclosure schemes for energy efficiency at the point of lease or sale is supported.

The gap is minimal standards for energy efficiency for rental properties. The State Government has undertaken consultation on the *Proposed Regulations for New Minimum Standards for Rental Properties and Rooming Houses* but have not acted on it. Council recommends the State Government adopt and fast-track the regulations.

Climate resilient housing for vulnerable communities

Council's *Climate Emergency Plan* seeks to ensure '*In Yarra, everyone lives and works in comfortable and climate-safe homes and buildings, supported by climate resilient public spaces and infrastructure.*'

The *Climate Emergency Plan* recognises that while the climate emergency affects everyone in the community, it is having a disproportionate impact on some. This includes those who do not have access to adequate housing or income, have accessibility needs or chronic health conditions, work in unsafe conditions or are marginalised due to culture, language or gender identity.

The plan notes community members in social housing, older adults, children, and young people, people with health conditions and the homeless can be at greater risk from climate impacts, particularly extreme heat or cold, due to the lack of investment in climate resilient and thermally comfortable infrastructure. Substantial investment in increasing the climate readiness and thermal comfort of housing is urgently needed to give people option to remain safely in their homes during extreme events.

Updated recommendation

34 Speed up household energy efficiency and electrification

Require efficient electric space heating and hot water when people replace their heaters at end-of-life and support low-income households to go all-electric. Complete social housing energy upgrades, including electrification and improve the energy efficiency and thermal comfort of social housing. Require Victorian homeowners to disclose the energy efficiency of their homes at the time of sale or lease.

Gaps / additional recommendations

New (gap)	Upgrade drainage assets Urgently upgrade the State's infrastructure drainage network to have sufficient capacity and interconnection with Council assets to assist in reducing the flood risk.
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A gap in the strategy is around drainage assets. Additional investigation and investment will be needed in infrastructure to understand the impacts of the proposed increase in growth.

The expansion of urban development and impervious surfaces has increased run off. Coupled with increasing intense rainfall events, there is the potential to overwhelm the existing stormwater infrastructure networks, which were designed for lower levels of rainfall intensity and runoff.

Authorities are struggling with the high cost of retrofits needed to address urban flooding and climate change. Yarra is investing \$4 million in a drainage renewal and upgrade program in the 2024-25 budget (along with a further \$10.8 million in other operating and civil projects which include stormwater asset renewal and upgrade). This significant investment in Council's stormwater network in addition to asset management also responds to climate change and increased urban runoff, but more investment will be needed.

Council drainage systems are interconnected with State Government drainage assets. The performance and effectiveness of a Council's drainage assets is often greatly influenced by the condition, function and capacity of the State Government drainage assets beyond the municipality.

There is a need for State Government to fund flood mitigation schemes and associated infrastructure upgrade works.

2.6 Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy

35 Prepare and publish infrastructure sector plans to shape Victoria's cities

Agree a set of assumptions for future population, jobs and land use for more compact cities. Require each department that owns infrastructure to develop an infrastructure sector plan as soon as possible, based on these assumptions, and publish strategic-level plans. Use the finished sector plans to decide infrastructure project funding.

Support

Officers support the production of infrastructure sector plans. Agreeing a set of assumptions for future population, jobs and land use is also essential. Current *Victoria in Future* forecasts are only released until 2036 whereas the *Plan for Victoria* housing targets seek to ensure capacity in the planning scheme to 2051.

36 Reform infrastructure contributions

Simplify Victoria's infrastructure contribution schemes to cover all types of housing developments and reflect the cost of infrastructure in different development settings.

Support with changes

Development contributions fund critical capital infrastructure projects such as roads, footpath, streetscape works as well as community infrastructure projects required to cater for the growing population of the municipality and the consequential increased demand.

Currently a mix of centralised and decentralised infrastructure contributions apply to development.

The process for Councils to apply developer contributions charges is onerous – being both costly and time consuming. They are also complex to administer.

Officers support the simplification of infrastructure contribution schemes.

Importance of infrastructure contributions to Yarra

As outlined in the *Yarra Asset Plan 2022-23*, Council currently manages a portfolio of assets that have a combined replacement value of over \$2.3 billion dollars. \$1.3 billion (55 per cent) is the replacement value of infrastructure assets and \$1.0 billion (42 per cent) of land assets. Council's current asset renewal upgrade expenditure is at a rate higher than depreciation (107.26 per cent).

The combination of replacing or upgrading ageing infrastructure and investing in new infrastructure, alongside the demands of rapid population growth, will require significant investment in Council's asset portfolio.

The City of Yarra is generally not building new infrastructure. The increasing costs of maintenance of existing buildings limit Council's ability to expand or increase our facilities. DCPs are a key source to fund new.

Council has begun work on its new Community Infrastructure Plan. The potential impact of the housing targets on population growth, age structure and location make this process more complex.

Community infrastructure will need to respond to the changing nature of the inner city by providing flexible, accessible, innovative and adaptable facilities that reflect universal design and meet multiple service needs.

As reported in Yarra's 2022/23 Annual Report, projects that attracted funding via Yarra's Development Contribution Plan accounted for \$5.76 million of investment, of which \$1.03 million (17.8 per cent) was funded through development contributions. This mechanism to fund vital community infrastructure projects must ensure that Councils are adequately supported to meet the community's infrastructure needs.

Review of infrastructure contributions

Officers understand the State Government is undertaking a review of infrastructure contributions. However little information around the scope and objectives of the review has been provided.

An industry working group consisting of key members of its Housing Affordability Partnership – the Property Council of Australia, Urban Development Institute of Australia, Housing Industry Association, Master Builders Victoria and Assemble have been tasked with delivering an approach to statewide developer contributions. It was due to report to the Minister for Planning in March.

Officers consider any new development contributions scheme should be:

- easy to administer
- equitable i.e. the funds will be accessible by Council and able to be spent where they are collected (noting funds must be held in a specific account and not added to Consolidated revenue)
- fit for purpose and specific to an area i.e. the contributions are tailored to the specific circumstances.

Any scheme must provide certainty for Council, developers and the broader community about how and to what extent new residential, commercial and industrial developments will be levied to ensure the necessary infrastructure is delivered in a timely manner.

The scheme must also recognise the differential costs of development in different parts of the State i.e. the high costs of land purchase and development in the inner city.

It is essential local government is consulted on any proposed infrastructure contributions scheme.

Scope - Housing and commercial development

The recommendation should include all forms of development and should not focus solely on housing developments. Other forms of development such as commercial development, for example, in Cremorne, generate the need for capital and community infrastructure projects.

Council's current development contributions scheme (implemented through Development Contributions Plan Overlay 1) applies to new residential, commercial and industrial development. Exemptions include alterations and renovations, small second dwelling, non-government schools and social housing.

Updated recommendation

36 Reform infrastructure contributions

Simplify Victoria's infrastructure contribution schemes to cover all types of housing, commercial and industrial developments and reflect the cost of infrastructure in different development settings. Consult with local government on any proposed changes to the infrastructure contributions regime.

37 Improve asset management of all government infrastructure

Fund asset managers to better understand the condition, use and performance standards of all government infrastructure. Use this information to develop asset management strategies and prioritise funding.

Support

The management of State Government assets is guided the *Asset Management Accountability Framework* (AMAF) (driven by the Department of Treasury and Finance).

The AMAF details mandatory asset management requirements as well as general guidance for agencies responsible for managing assets. Mandatory requirements include developing asset management strategies, governance frameworks, performance standards and processes to regularly monitor and improve asset management. The requirements also include establishing systems for maintaining assets and processes for identifying and addressing performance failures.

There are no common standards across Councils.

Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) seeks to provide reliable performance data, improve transparency and enhance service efficiency. The Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) identifies that '*Victorian councils deliver a wide range of services, spending \$11 billion annually. A reliable framework is critical for measuring performance at this scale.*'

In its 2019 review, VAGO have identified issues with data consistency and accuracy and made several recommendations to Local Government Victoria.

Officers consider standardisation of standards should also occur for local government. The creation of measures and guidelines for asset performance, utilisation, investment will elevate the level of asset management in local government.

38 Prepare for more recycling and waste infrastructure

Identify places for new recycling and waste infrastructure and publish them in the next update to the *Victorian recycling infrastructure plan*. Plan for waste and recycling sites together with other commercial and industrial land. Make changes to planning controls to allow for facilities where they are needed.

Support

Yarra supports accelerated efforts to transition to a circular economy by supporting Victorian homes and businesses to consume less, repair, share, and repurpose more and send less waste to landfill.

Officers support draft Recommendation # 38 however, it is imperative the waste hierarchy continues to underpin circular economy and waste management.

Council's *Climate Emergency Plan* seeks to transition Yarra to a circular economy by consuming less, reusing, repairing, sharing and recycling more and sending less waste to landfill.

A circular economy model employs three core principles; design out waste and pollution, keep products and materials in use, and regenerate natural systems.

A more circular and sustainable system is required that works with manufacturers to rethink how products are made and reduce the waste that is created during production, supports our local recycling industry, reduces excess consumption and reuses items wherever possible.

This strategy requires state, federal and international work to ensure a more circular and sustainable system. Significant policy and regulatory systemic change are required to achieve an economic system that views generation of waste as a design flaw and ensures our production and consumption habits support, rather than challenge, the transition to a net zero emissions economy.

The Victorian Government's plan for a circular economy has a strong focus on recycling, but misses opportunities presented by a fully circular approach.

The strategy should enable the development of a complete circular economy.

Given the strategy has a 30 year time horizon, it should include the circular economy as it relates to land use planning, such as a desire to design out waste, recirculate finite resources at local/regional scales and support land use planning for local/regional waste facilities, and avoiding the transportation of waste vast distances.

There are also cultural changes that need to be employed. For example, Council is seeking to develop, support and promote Yarra as a Circular Economy hub for businesses. Opportunities also need to be provided for the community to recycle, repair and reuse products. Changes to packaging requirements and increased product stewardship are also identified in Council's *Climate Emergency Plan*.

39 Use digital technologies to better design, build, operate and maintain government infrastructure

Pilot digital technologies on government infrastructure projects and report on their progress. Use building information modelling on major infrastructure and housing projects. Improve capabilities in government agencies and review procurement processes to promote greater use of digital technologies.

Support

Officers support the use of digital technology particularly in data collection and comparisons.

40 Use modern traffic control technology for efficient and safe journeys

Further extend modern traffic control technology like sensors and cameras along arterial roads in Victoria's largest cities. Begin expanding smart motorways into Melbourne's growth area freeways.

Support

Officers support the use of technology to improve transport movement.

Future option Charge people fairly to use roads

Introduce road charges that help manage congestion and improve productivity. Consider options such as car parking levies, off-peak freeway tolls, congestion pricing trials, or road user charging for all motorists with lowered fixed road charges. Work with the Australian Government on road pricing options.

Support

Officers support the ability to charge road users recognising the impacts of different transport types on the road asset e.g. the impacts of small cars versus trucks and large SUVs.

41 Make rail freight competitive, reliable and efficient

Develop and publish a 30-year integrated rail freight network plan and fund a 10-year rail freight maintenance program. Develop a freight network coordination policy.

Support

Officers support the use of rail rather than roads for freight movement.

42 Encourage off-peak freight delivery in urban areas

Prepare for growing freight volumes in urban areas by piloting an off-peak freight delivery program in a high-density area of Melbourne. If successful, expand off-peak delivery for more productive and sustainable freight movement.

Support

See response to Future option below.

Future option	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.
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Support

Officers note the retention of industrial and commercial land in the inner city is essential to provide warehousing / dark stores that supply 'just in time' delivery.

Yarra has seen the expansion of last mile delivery of goods through cargo bikes, couriers and electric trucks (as used by IKEA). There is a potential for new and emerging technologies to provide alternatives. They fulfil the same function but have less impact on the community.

Freight should be confined to arterial roads and other roads that are suitable wherever possible, avoiding residential areas.

# 43	Create and preserve opportunities for future major infrastructure projects Create and preserve opportunities to build major infrastructure projects which might be required in the long term. This includes expanding desalination capacity, City Loop reconfiguration, extending and electrifying metropolitan trains to growth areas in Melbourne's north and south-east, Melbourne Metro 2, the Bay West port, the outer metropolitan road and rail corridor and connecting western intermodal freight terminal.
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Strongly support

Officers consider the reservation of land for major infrastructure projects essential.

Improved processes should be developed where land is no longer considered necessary for infrastructure, with local government offered first right of refusal.

Future option	Reconfigure the City Loop for more frequent and reliable trains Reconfigure the City Loop by splitting 2 City Loop tunnels into 2 separate cross-city train lines. Build around 3 kilometres of new train tunnels and upgrade related power and signalling. Increase service frequency on the Craigieburn, Upfield and Frankston lines.
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Support

Melbourne Metro 2 (MM2)

Council strongly supports the realisation of Melbourne Metro 2. Council's Transport Strategy identifies the need for at least one station in Carlton / North Fitzroy.

MM2 will also require the rationalisation of the Clifton Hill Junction. This junction is at capacity.

Officers also note the station itself requires redevelopment. An increase in capacity is needed to improve the reliability of services and improve the amenity of the station itself. The community has highlighted issues with accessibility of the station via tunnels etc.

Future option	Extend metropolitan trains to growth areas in Melbourne's north and south-east Extend and electrify metropolitan trains to Clyde and towards Kalkallo to support growth in new suburbs.
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Yarra has no specific position on this matter

Gaps / additional recommendations

New	Coordinate planning and the delivery of infrastructure in Government priority precinct Undertake integrated planning of priority precincts. Coordinate Government departments, agencies and Councils. Fund and deliver infrastructure for priority precincts.
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Council officers recommend a clear process is developed to coordinate planning and delivery of infrastructure in Government priority precincts.

An example of this, is Cremorne. Yarra worked closely with the Victorian Planning Authority to prepare the *Cremorne Place Implementation Plan* (CPIP) and subsequently the Cremorne Urban Design Framework (UDF).

However, many of the actions in both the CPIP and UDF require cross-government commitment such improved access to Birrarung and across the river or upgrades to arterial road intersections. A cross Government working group was established but has not met in the past two years.

New (gap)	Create an inner city transport plan Facilitate an integrated transport plan across municipalities and government agencies across the inner city. Consider all modes of transport.
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Yarra officers consider there is a need for an inner transport plan to enable proper planning of the inner city. It would elevate infrastructure planning by identifying the various priorities.

The plan would consider the role of streets, trams, trains, bikes and vehicle routes and enable Councils to better plan for development along these routes.

New (gap)	Undertake an assessment of the State's strategic and tactical risks in terms of infrastructure Gauge the level of risk across the infrastructure market. Compile evidence and identify market and sector insights to inform the analysis.
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A strategic piece, that should inform the strategy, is missing - an assessment of the strategic and tactical risks for the State. For example, the impacts of flooding or if specific infrastructure fails. Infrastructure Australia has undertaken an analysis of infrastructure risk in 2021 from a market and government perspective.