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About you

Please tell us which best describes you:

☐ Victorian resident

☐ Victorian business owner/operator

☐ Industry professional

☐ Community organisation representative

☐ Local government representative

☐ State government representative

☐ Researcher

☒ Other (please specify): Representative for an Alliance of Local Governments

Your focus areas

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

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

GSEM Response to Victoria's Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy

Greater South East Melbourne (GSEM) welcomes the opportunity to provide input into Infrastructure Victoria's draft 30-year Infrastructure Strategy 2025-2055 and supports the ongoing efforts made by Infrastructure Victoria to set an agenda for prioritising government infrastructure investment to where it is most needed.

GSEM Background

Greater South East Melbourne (GSEM) advocates for jobs, infrastructure, investment, liveability, sustainability and wellbeing for the southeast and everyone who works and lives in the region.

GSEM includes the shires of Cardinia and Mornington Peninsula, and the cities of Casey, Frankston, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Knox and Monash alongside independent Directors Simon McKeon AO, James Merlino and Margaret Fitzherbert.

The Greater South East Melbourne region has more than 1.5 million residents and is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia's fastest growing city and is one of the country's most important economic centres. The southeast produces \$85 billion in Gross Regional Product and is one of Australia's largest manufacturing regions, with more manufacturing jobs than greater Adelaide and Western Sydney.

Key GSEM Feedback

While we welcome the overall direction and strategic priorities outlined in the document, there are several critical issues that require further attention before the final version is released.

These concerns primarily relate to the expectations placed on local government, the role of communities in decision-making, the recognition of the Greater South East Melbourne (GSEM) region, and the omission of key infrastructure projects.

1. Unrealistic Expectations on Local Government for Funding and Implementation

The strategy places significant responsibility on local governments to fund and implement many of its recommendations, particularly regarding community infrastructure such as libraries, community upgrades, and support facilities. However, local governments simply do not have the financial capacity to absorb these costs without substantial contributions from state and federal governments.

Furthermore, much of the major infrastructure investment highlighted in the strategy falls well beyond the means of local councils. This should not become an exercise in cost-shifting—state and federal governments must commit to adequately resourcing these initiatives to ensure they are delivered effectively.

GSEM does not support decisions made by the state government that result in transferring its own responsibilities and costs to local government.

2. Limited Role of Local Communities in Shaping Their Own Areas

While we acknowledge the value of a long-term, 30-year vision, we are concerned about how many of the recommendations will be implemented in a way that meaningfully involves local communities.

Too often, local governments are responsible for delivering state-led policies, such as infill development and planning controls, without communities being properly consulted or engaged. This disconnect frequently results in frustration being unfairly directed at local councils. A more collaborative approach is needed to ensure that local communities have a direct role in shaping the future of their areas.

Infrastructure also plays a significant role in livability and community safety. The way development occurs, in what form and in what locations, can have wide-reaching consequences for the community. They should be involved in the development process, and community safety and liveability should be key assessment factors in development.

3. Lack of Recognition of the Greater South East Melbourne Region

The GSEM region is one of the most significant economic drivers for Victoria, and it is disappointing that the strategy does not adequately recognise its importance. Despite the region's rapid population growth and its major contribution to the state's economy, there is little to no mention of its specific infrastructure and policy needs. As our population continues to expand in the coming years, it is critical that GSEM receives dedicated attention in the strategy to ensure appropriate planning and investment in key infrastructure.

4. Omission of Critical Infrastructure Projects

The strategy fails to include several major infrastructure projects that are essential for supporting the continued growth and economic development of the South East. While there is mention of extending rail to Melton and improving services to regional Victoria, major projects crucial to our region—such as a South East airport, the Thompsons Road upgrade and the trackless tram initiative—have been completely omitted. These projects are vital for improving connectivity, reducing congestion, and ensuring the long-term prosperity of the region. They must be explicitly addressed in the final version of the strategy.

We urge the authors of the strategy to address these concerns in the final document to ensure that it adequately reflects the needs and priorities of Greater South East Melbourne.

Victoria's Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy – Response to Recommendations

Below is our feedback to each of the recommendations.

1. Build more social housing

GSEM supports initiatives which address housing issues in local communities and increase investment in social and affordable housing. Access to safe, secure, and affordable housing is



important for our community in Melbourne's greater south east. A consistent pipeline of new social housing is vital to meet the needs of low-income Victorians in our growing region.

2. Facilitate markets and invest in kindergarten infrastructure

GSEM supports the facilitation of private and not-for-profit investment in kindergarten infrastructure, along with improved transparency in demand and supply data. However, we emphasise the urgent need for reform to ensure the sustainability of kindergarten services. Without changes to existing program settings, cost shifting from the state to local government and others in the non-for-profit sector other will constrain our ability to develop and operate new kindergarten facilities. GSEM urges the state to review funding models to support long-term viability for service and infrastructure delivery.

3. Plan and deliver expanded and new schools

GSEM support identifying areas in need for school expansions, particularly in growth areas where access to sufficient public schools has often substantially lagged new residential development. With the Victorian Governments plans to focus growth on infill areas, this investment must also include the redevelopment and expansion of existing schools where they do not have the capacity or quality of infrastructure required to meet the demands of new populations.

In addition, GSEM notes the contribution of non-government schools in Melbourne's south-east in providing additional school education capacity and choice for our residents. As part of a comprehensive approach to delivering education infrastructure the Victoria Government must support these providers to invest in Melbourne's greater south east and expand their footprint where demand exists.

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

GSEM strongly supports the expansion of TAFE in Melbourne's growth corridors - particularly in the south-east. Improving access to in key areas of workforce need is crucial to address current and future skills shortages and to support our region's economic development.

With the future industrial development of the south east providing significant opportunity for the region to attract new investment and expand its output, it is essential to ensure that training providers are located proximate where growth is occurring and responding to its future workforce needs.

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

We support a consistent and balanced approach to funding the planning and construction of libraries and aquatic centres across our region. These community facilities are important to health, education, and social cohesion. However, we highlight that local governments do not have the financial capacity to deliver these facilities alone, with project costs now often exceeding \$100 million. Future funding arrangements must include commitments from state and federal governments to equitably co-invest with local government to deliver these facilities and meet the needs of our rapidly growing populations.

6. Make government infrastructure more accessible

GSEM supports the completion of accessibility upgrades for public transport stops and increased accessibility in government buildings. This investment is essential to ensure that infrastructure is inclusive and compliant with legal standards. We also support the provision of clear, accessible public information to assist community members in navigating government services and facilities

7. Rezone locations near existing infrastructure for more home choices

GSEM in principle supports measures that improve housing access and transport infrastructure across Victoria. However, wherever increased intensity of development is targeted, sufficient investment must be allocated to ensure that essential health, education, transport, and community infrastructure is able to cope with additional demand. If significant new development is advanced without consideration to this, our existing infrastructure and services across Melbourne's south east will struggle to meet new demands placed on it.

8. Extend Melbourne's trams to encourage more new homes nearby

GSEM supports a detailed assessment of Melbourne's tram network and possible extensions to it being undertaken. This should consider previously proposed extensions into Melbourne's south east including the extension of the Route 75 tram from Vermont to Knox, and the development of an extension from Caulfield Station to Rowville (via Monash University).

As part of this detailed assessment, completing the extension of services using trackless tram options should be considered.

10. Build a new bus rapid transit network

GSEM supports initiatives to improve the speed, frequency, and reliability of bus services across Melbourne's south east. Giving buses priority on roads and simplifying routes to make them faster and more direct can make public transport a more viable and attractive option for commuters in our region.

We support further work being completed on the four key routes identified by Infrastructure Victoria in our region, and note that additional consideration needs to be given to how these proposed routes can be extended to provide access into Casey/Cardinia and Frankston/Mornington Peninsula.

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

The extension and electrification of the Cranbourne Line to Clyde and Frankston Line to Langwarrin should be placed on an equal footing to proposed extensions in Melbourne's west and north. Placing this extension as a lower priority 'future option' is not supported by GSEM.

12. Run more bus and coach services in regional Victoria

GSEM note that existing coach services operated by V/Line originate at Dandenong and Pakenham Stations and service towns within our region including Nar Nar Goon, Tynong, Garfield, Bunyip, Longwarry, Torradin, Koo Wee Rup and Lang Lang. Improvements to these routes are important in enhancing access from these communities to education, employment, and healthcare.

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

GSEM supports initiatives which serve to increase mode shift and make public transport more affordable and accessible for our residents. Initiatives that serve to increase patronage on public transport during off peak periods are desirable.

Victorians are healthy and safe

14. Make local streets safer for children and communities

GSEM support evidence-based initiatives which serve to improve road safety for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians, GSEM councils have no current plans to broadly consider introduction of 30km/h on local roads, and note that any initiatives which may seek to implement such zones should be led by local government in consultation with local communities and considered on the basis of a specific and localised need.

15. Build safe cycling networks in Melbourne and regional cities

GSEM supports initiatives which extend existing cycle corridors and improve connections between them. A coordinated approach is required to ensure that our growing communities have access to option of using active transport with a safe networks of cycling corridors proximate to where they live.

16. Help government schools share their grounds

The increased use of government school grounds by local community clubs and groups has positive potential to open up additional active open space in our region.

Work to open up space on government schools should be completed in close consultation with local government to ensure that facilities identified for upgrade address an identified demand and complement existing active opens space infrastructure plans and use strategies operating within the municipality.

GSEM does not support a position which proposes any cost shifting related to the maintenance of government school grounds onto local government.

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

The development of priorities for investment in community health facilities must adequately consider the needs of disadvantages and underserved communities in Melbourne's south

east. GSEM support an outcome which delivers reliable, long-term investment in facilities and programs which can help to meet growing demand and address gaps in service provision across our region.

18. Build more residential alcohol and other drug treatment facilities

It is a responsibility of the Victorian Government to provide adequate investment in residential rehabilitation and withdrawal facilities to meet the state's growing need for alcohol and other drug treatment services.

These services are important in addressing complex health and social issues and must be readily available to resident within our communities

19. Invest in digital healthcare

Expanding digital healthcare is crucial for modernising our health system. Providing statewide access to virtual care and medical image sharing can improve efficiencies within our health system, improve care coordination, and help patients manage their health from home. These innovations are important for people in our communities with mobility challenges or those living a distance from health centres.

20. Upgrade critical public hospital infrastructure

The ongoing upgrade of key public hospital infrastructure across Victoria is important, and this no different in Melbourne's south east.

GSEM note that each of the priority hospital upgrades identified by Infrastructure Victoria are for health facilities which predominantly service populations outside of our region. There needs to be a greater level of equity in how funding to upgrade hospitals is prioritised across the state, noting that facilities such as Rosebud Hospital are in urgent need of upgrade.

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

22. Invest in secure homes for Aboriginal Victorians

Aboriginal Australians are over-represented in the homelessness system, and GSEM supports further investment to develop capacity across the Aboriginal housing and homelessness sector.

23. Fund better health and wellbeing infrastructure for Aboriginal Victorians

GSEM supports initiatives focussed on closing the gaps in health outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians in Melbourne's greater south east, including ensuring that suitable infrastructure exists to deliver vital services.

Victoria has a thriving natural environment

24. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from infrastructure



GSEM strongly supports the Victorian Government delivering construction projects with an emphasis on deploying low carbon infrastructure. Demonstrating and leading the construction industry in the deployment of new low carbon products and design principles is crucial to enable emissions reduction in this sector.

The [GSEM Net Zero Road Map](#) outlines several strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from infrastructure:

- Electrification of new and existing buildings: This involves replacing gas appliances with electric alternatives such as heat pumps for space heating and hot water, and induction cooktops for cooking. Heat pumps are particularly efficient, using only a fraction of the energy compared to gas heaters.
- Use of Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs): PPAs allow organisations to procure renewable energy directly from generators at a stable price, often lower than traditional energy sources.
- Installation of rooftop solar PV systems: Encouraging the installation of solar panels on rooftops to harness solar energy, which can significantly reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

25. Advance integrated water management and use more recycled water

The GSEM report emphasises the importance of improving water management practices and increasing the use of recycled water. Specific strategies include:

- Integrated Water Management (IWM): This approach involves coordinating the management of water, land, and related resources to maximise economic and social welfare without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.
- Use of recycled water: Promoting the use of treated wastewater for non-potable purposes such as irrigation, industrial processes, and toilet flushing.

26. Better use government land for open space and greenery

GSEM supports the provision of additional funding from the Victoria Government to assist local government to better connect our public open spaces and open up additional government owned land for use as public open space.

GSEM councils are currently undertaking work to increase tree canopy, particularly in areas of the region where coverage is below the metropolitan Melbourne average.

Victoria is resilient to climate change and other future risks

27. Better prepare infrastructure for climate change

GSEM supports and encourages the continued growth and development of infrastructure to meet the needs of its communities. However, at the heart of every new planning decision and infrastructure project requires a consideration of the impact of climate on these new assets. Particularly, when asset life spans are well over 50 years.

GSEM recommends that careful consideration be given to the location of new assets and their long-term exposure to climate extremes. Close collaboration with local councils is critical in these decisions.

28. Use new flood maps to revise planning schemes

Over the past 6 years the majority of GSEM member councils, in partnership with SECCCA, have been working to understand the vulnerability of their assets as well as private assets, including homes, in their municipalities. This involves undertaking climate impact and vulnerability assessments, criticality assessments and reflecting findings in asset management planning and forward budgeting where it relates to council assets.

GSEM and SECCCA support the inclusion of new flooding data into the planning scheme to ensure that planning decisions reflect our best understanding of the likely impacts of flooding now and in the future under climate change scenarios. It is recommended that this data and underlying science is updated regularly.

Many councils also have poor drainage asset data which can significantly inform hydrological modelling and flooding risk. GSEM and SECCCA would welcome a coordinated approach with Infrastructure Victoria and Melbourne Water to fill these data gaps and in addition the data gaps associated with establishing flood heights for residential homes.

29. Coordinate faster delivery of key energy infrastructure

GSEM supports a coordinated approach with relevant stakeholders to identify the future energy needs of our region. This is critical to enable fast-tracked energy infrastructure, which is required as sectors rapidly electrify. Steps can be taken by Infrastructure Victoria to improve environmental assessments and site selection for energy projects.

30. Improve environmental assessments and site selection for energy projects

To improve environmental assessments and site selection for energy projects, GSEM advocates for:

- Regulatory changes: Reducing barriers to renewable energy projects by streamlining regulatory processes.
- Support for innovative solutions: Encouraging the adoption of innovative and effective solutions for energy generation and storage.

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

GSEM and SECCCA members acknowledge the significant contribution the Victorian Government has made to home and neighbourhood batteries. We welcome further investment and invite consultation in how this can be more effectively communicated, delivered and supported by local councils. An immediate need is for member councils, are regional energy plans.

32. Determine long-duration energy storage needs

While the report acknowledges the importance of determining long-duration energy storage needs, specific details are not extensively covered in the provided sections. GSEM suggests:

- Research and development: Investing in R&D to identify and develop long-duration energy storage technologies.

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

GSEM supports regional approach and suggests several strategies for regional energy planning:

- Electrification of gas-using equipment: Transitioning residential and commercial sectors from gas to electric systems.
- Consideration of green hydrogen: Exploring the use of green hydrogen for industrial processes as a cleaner alternative to fossil gas.

34. Speed up household energy efficiency and electrification

GSEM acknowledge the significant work of Solar Victoria and the implementation of the Victorian Energy Upgrade program delivering significant energy, carbon and cost savings to households within the region. The mandatory electrification of all new homes is also welcome. With the exception of new homes, these programs only act in a voluntary capacity and uptake is limited to the number of grants available and interest.

GSEM acknowledge the Victorian Government's leading work on the Victorian Energy Scorecard which provides independent and authoritative advice to help households transition to net zero and rate their homes energy performance, creating a fair benchmark between houses. However, this program is underutilised and again requires market forces for delivery and voluntary uptake.

GSEM supports a gradual approach to mandatory disclosure and eventually minimum standard for all homes. This will enable emission reduction targets to be reached, households to realise benefits as soon as possible, and create market certainty.

GSEM recommend that all house sales and rental agreements should require a mandatory Victorian Residential Efficiency rating and in time a minimum energy rating requirement. The introduction of these measures should be commensurate with achieving emission reduction targets by 2050.

Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy

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



It is crucial that the Victorian Government undertake detailed planning with respect to the future provision of essential public infrastructure for transport, health, education, justice, emergency services, social housing, social services, water and sewerage, recycling and resource recovery.

Clarity around what, when and where new and upgraded public infrastructure is required, and how it will be funded is particularly important for Melbourne's greater south east as significant population growth continues over coming decades.

It is noted that Infrastructure Victoria has a legislated role to play with regard to the development of infrastructure sector plans.

36. Reform infrastructure contributions

GSEM supports the review and enhancement of Development Contribution Plans (DCPs) to ensure funding matches delivery of the required local, state and federal infrastructure, with any transition to a new DCP or state-wide infrastructure levy ensuring no precinct is worse-off. This should include looking to develop a better tool for established and infill areas.

Review of the Growth Area Infrastructure Contribution (GAIC) Levy is also required.

37. Improve asset management of all government infrastructure

It is a responsibility of the Victorian Government to that the infrastructure it is responsible for is adequately maintained, and that this responsibility is not cost shifted onto local government. Process changes within the Victorian Government to ensure that its infrastructure is adequately maintained are supported.

38. Prepare for more recycling and waste infrastructure

Identification of future sites for recycling and waste infrastructure is an important aspect of comprehensively planning for growth in Melbourne's greater south east. This can be considered as an aspect of the opportunity that existed to advance the development of significant new industrial areas in Melbourne's greater south east.

GSEM supports the proposition that more waste and recycling infrastructure is needed, however advocates strongly for greater strategic planning to support this. There have been significant changes in the legislative and policy positions of the government. Making it difficult for local government to comply with expectations.

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

Opportunities to pilot the use of new digital technologies to improve the delivery and operation of government infrastructure should be adopted by the Victoria Government, with learnings shared across government and with local government.

40. Use modern traffic control technology for efficient and safe journeys

It is noted that Infrastructure Victoria's draft plan does not consider extending the use of modern traffic control technologies in Melbourne's greater south east. Further consideration should be given to the upgrade of additional arterial roads in our region with modern traffic control technology, particularly those which are congested and developed to maximum capacity.

41. Make rail freight competitive, reliable, and efficient

Victoria needs a comprehensive plan for freight movements which considers the network as a whole and ensures that existing road and rail infrastructure are more efficiently used. This should include a clear strategy to support moving greater volumes of freight off roads, and onto rail, in Melbourne's greater south east. The Victorian Government has promised to deliver an intermodal freight terminal in our region a decade, and delivery of this must be a priority.

42. Encourage off-peak freight delivery in urban areas

It is noted that this recommendation is targeted at inner Melbourne.

Building on this there a role for the Victorian Government to play in ensuring that the truck fleets servicing the Melbourne's greater south east adopt technological advancements that improve efficiency of movement, road safety, and emissions. This can include supporting the transition of trucks to hydrogen fuel, and trailing technologies during off-peak periods which increase automation and make road freight transport safer and more efficient.

43. Create and preserve opportunities for future major infrastructure projects

GSEM support the concept that work must be undertaken now to preserve opportunities to build major infrastructure projects that Victoria needs into the future.

This must include a continuation of work to secure a site for the development of a future South East Airport.

It is essential that planning for a new domestic and international airport for the south east is completed now, with necessary land identified and set aside to ensure its construction remains feasible in the medium term.

As Melbourne's greater south east continues to grow, a South East Airport will be a vital piece of economic infrastructure for our region, increasing access to export markets and reducing cross-metropolitan congestion.

It is also noted the Infrastructure Victoria's draft plan fails to identify future major infrastructure projects which facilitate the expansion new industrial land developments in Melbourne's greater south east. GSEM believe that our region has a central role to play in provision of land for new industrial developments over the next 20 years.

In particular, the development of this land in Officer South and neighbouring areas is of particular importance. It has the potential to increase economic output by \$58 billion, facilitate

140,000 jobs, and provide residents of the greater south east with the employment opportunities closer to where they live.

To enable this development to proceed, work must be undertaken to prioritise the planning and construction of a staged extension of Thompsons Road between Berwick-Cranbourne Road in Clyde North and Koo Wee Rup Road in Pakenham.