

Draft Submission to Victoria's Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy

Submitted by Council Officers of Hobsons Bay City Council

Date: April 2025

Introduction

Hobsons Bay City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to Infrastructure Victoria's Draft 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy. This feedback reflects insights from Council officers across multiple departments, with specific attention to areas of critical importance to the community, including affordable housing, transport, early education, community infrastructure, and planning for sustainable development.

This submission responds to recommendations and future options relevant to Hobsons Bay City Council. For each, officers outline the level of support, commentary, evidence from local experience, and recommendations for potential improvement.

Context

The Yalukit Willam clan of the Bunurong People lived in the area now known as Hobsons Bay and had strong connections to land and sea country. Today the city is home to over 93,000 people and includes the suburbs of Altona, Altona Meadows, Altona North, Laverton, Seabrook, Seaholme, South Kingsville, Spotswood, Newport Williamstown and Williamstown North. The community is also made stronger by its cultural diversity with over 120 different languages spoken at home.

Historic suburbs and places in Hobsons Bay tell the story of Melbourne's industrial and commercial past. Today, the city plays a key role in the Victorian economy supporting close to 40,000 jobs within State significant industrial and commercial precincts. In 2022, Hobsons Bay's Gross Regional Product was estimated at \$6.07 billion GRP (+2.32% from 2021) representing 1.22% of Victoria's total GSP (Gross State Product).

Hobsons Bay's rich natural environment is one of its greatest assets and includes 20km of coastline consisting of wetlands and parklands along Port Phillip Bay as well as remnant native grasslands and creek systems.

Recommendations 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.

Support: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

With a growing population and increasing cost of living pressures in Victoria, more residents of Hobsons Bay require assistance. Any efforts to increase the supply of all types of housing are welcome.

Supporting Evidence:

To support this recommendation, Council established the Hobsons Bay Affordable Housing Trust to receive developer contributions towards affordable housing. Additionally, Council contributed land at Epsom Street in Laverton for the Epsom Street Affordable Housing Project to construct 67 new homes. The Trust is a core mechanism for ensuring local delivery of affordable housing and should be supported by State legislation.

Proposed Improvements:

Amend the Planning Scheme to mandate contributions to the Hobsons Bay Affordable Housing Trust. A consistent, statewide framework for mandatory contributions is required, as highlighted in Council's submission to Plan Victoria.

Recommendation 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 supply of kindergarten places. Publish priorities for government investment to deliver kindergartens in communities that will have the greatest need.

Support: In Part

Officer's Commentary:

With the impending State Government initiative of Pre-Prep, four-year-olds will be eligible for 30 hours per week of kindergarten from 2036. Current infrastructure cannot meet anticipated demand, so additional infrastructure is needed to ensure all four-year-old children have access to kindergarten.

Supporting Evidence:

The State Government Initiative – *Best Start, Best Life Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan (Version 2)* has not delivered the actual infrastructure needed to meet service requirements. This leads to indirect costs for Local Government and must be addressed to ensure infrastructure aligns with policy.

Proposed Improvements:

Update the recommendation to require a full review of the plan and associated funding model to address this major infrastructure need.

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.

Support: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

The cost of constructing or renewing regional aquatic and recreation facilities is prohibitive for local governments. Escalating costs mean that funding one project may equate to multiple years of Capital Works Programs.

Supporting Evidence:

A project in Hobsons Bay, estimates at \$60 million in 2020, is now projected to cost \$100 million as of mid-2024. Without meaningful State and Federal Government funding, Council must fund up to 90% of the project, limiting resources for renewal programs and essential infrastructure upgrades (roads, drainage etc.)

Proposed Improvements:

The State Government should fund feasibility studies to support major investments in regional aquatic and recreation facilities and implement a funding program to support medium-scale upgrades to existing facilities, not just new developments in growth areas.

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.

Support: In Part

Officer's Commentary:

While rezoning is supported, significant local barriers must be considered, including contaminated land, Major Hazard Facilities, climate hazards and heritage overlays.

Supporting Evidence:

councils have undertaken a series of risk assessments and asset planning scenarios that detail the many asset management challenges for inner-metropolitan areas. Looking to the future, the design, construction and management of the built environment and infrastructure needs to be adaptive and resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Proposed Improvements:

Amend the recommendation to ensure detailed strategic planning accompanies any rezoning to ensure appropriate development.

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: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

With rising populations and cost pressures, more Hobsons Bay residents need housing support. Increasing housing supply of all types is essential.

Supporting Evidence:

A percentage of homes within Precinct 15 in Hobsons Bay has been allocated for affordable housing, but this has occurred without a mandated requirement.

Proposed Improvements:

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Recommendation 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: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

Many parts of Hobsons Bay require access to fast, reliable bus services. This recommendation aligns with Council's advocacy for a review of buses across western Melbourne.

Supporting Evidence:

Hobsons Bay has long advocated for improved bus routes, but improvements have yet to be delivered. Without reform, poor utilisation and inefficiency will persist.

Proposed Improvements:

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Recommendation 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: In-part

Officer's Commentary:

Land availability and existing network constraints may hinder delivery. However, successful implementation would significantly improve outcomes and utilisation.

Supporting Evidence:

Current bus networks in Brisbane identify an effective approach to delivering this. Using this approach could be useful when testing feasibility.

Proposed Improvements:

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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 cities. Assess delivery of a new train station at Altona North accompanied by land rezoning.

Support: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

This aligns with Council's advocacy to improve western services and reopen Pasiley Train Station. Delivery alongside Melbourne Metro 2 would bring broader benefits.

Supporting Evidence:

Work was carried out by an independent rail advocacy group, Rail Futures Institute outlines a viable approach and the benefit of this project.

Proposed Improvements:

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Recommendation 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: No

Officer's Commentary:

While the safety intent is understood, more community engagement and supporting guidance is needed before implementation.

Supporting Evidence:

Implementing 30km/h speed limits without adequate engagement will likely reduce community support and diminish benefits.

Proposed Improvements:

Maintain the current speed zoning approach and embed recent guideline revisions before considering further changes.

Recommendation 15: Build safe cycling networks in Melbourne and regional cities

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

Support: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

Investment in cycling infrastructure is currently low. A funding review is needed, with greater support from the State.

Supporting Evidence:

Current strategic cycling corridors are road-focused, complicating and increasing the cost of delivery. Public open spaces should be included in future plans.

Proposed Improvements:

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Recommendation 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 incentives shared across outside school hours.

Support: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

Increasing access to the Department of Education (school) infrastructure outside school hours will enhance community recreation opportunities.

Supporting Evidence:

Hobsons Bay has two Joint User Agreements with the Department of Education to utilise school facilities outside of school times. While beneficial, these are often complex and subject to changes based on school personnel. High capital investment and complicated agreements deter collaboration.

Proposed Improvements:

Create a simplified process for access to school facilities rather than the current Joint User Agreement Process. Alternatively, provide maintenance funding directly to schools and allow community clubs to liaise with schools independently.

Recommendation 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.

Support: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

The municipality faces growing risks from coastal inundation and urban heat. Green infrastructure is essential for climate change as reinforced in our Plan for Victoria submission.

Supporting Evidence:

Hobsons Bay has planted over 120,000 trees in the past five years, representing a \$6-7 million investment. Only \$500,000 was received in State funding. Greater funding support is necessary.

Proposed Improvements:

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Recommendation 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: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

As one of Victoria's most vulnerable coastal municipalities, Hobsons Bay supports an integrated, statewide approach to climate resilience in planning. Council strongly advocates for metropolitan-level flood mapping and sea level rise adaptation strategies.

Supporting Evidence: nil

Proposed Improvements:

To respond and deliver on this major recommendation the following elements will be necessary:

- More sustainable funding mechanisms for local government infrastructure and assets in response to the climate crisis.
- Investment to train and upskill the workforce who will play an important role in climate resilience.
- Good quality data to ensure informed planning, action and decision-making.

Recommendation 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: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

Hobsons Bay advocates for improved, consistent methods to collect affordable housing contributions across Victoria. A comprehensive funding and finance strategy is critical to identify funding and delivery pathways for all infrastructure classifications, including those within and separate to the DCP, and to provide greater certainty for all agencies and landowners involved in delivering infrastructure.

Supporting Evidence:

Voluntary contributions to the Hobsons Bay Affordable Housing Trust are difficult to negotiate. Growth is outpacing infrastructure, and consistent funding models are essential.

Proposed Improvements:

Amend the Planning Scheme to make affordable housing and core infrastructure contributions mandatory.

Recommendation 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: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

While asset plans are required under the Local Government Act, the absence of minimum standards results in inconsistency. The cost of this work is high, and consistent guidance would be beneficial to the community. A major threat to council's financial sustainability is the long-term ability to maintain existing assets to an adequate level. Typically, asset repair and renewal is considerably more costly than building new infrastructure. A shift in both State and Federal funding is required to ensure asset renewals and upgrades are supported in addition to new infrastructure projects.

Supporting Evidence:

The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (IPWEA) estimates it will cost \$51 billion to replace poor infrastructure and longer term, \$106-\$138 billion to replace infrastructure currently in fair condition. IPWEA concludes that an infrastructure renewal gap is prevalent, that is, assets are deteriorating faster than councils can fund maintenance and/or renewal works for.

Proposed Improvements:

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Recommendation 42: Encourage off-peak freight delivery in urban areas

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

Support: No

Officer's Commentary:

Many freight corridors in Hobsons Bay are near residential areas. Off-peak movements may negatively impact amenity unless interface issues are resolved first.

Supporting Evidence:

Prioritise interface planning reforms and resolve residential-industrial land use conflicts, particularly around Altona North and Brooklyn, before piloting off-peak freight movement.

Proposed Improvements:

Resolve interface issues before pursuing this recommendation.

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.

Support: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

Well-planned freight precincts near rail and road connections can reduce impacts. Planning and design for reduced interface impacts with surrounding residential areas will also lead to greater overall community outcomes.

Supporting Evidence:

There is significant industrial zoned land throughout Hobsons Bay that has good connection with rail and major roads, and creating freight hubs that are well designed will lead to greater community outcomes. Ensuring the freight hubs coexist alongside manufacturing uses in close proximity will also lead to greater job creation and reduced freight movements as well.

Proposed Improvements:

Ensure freight hubs are planned alongside industrial uses to reduce overall infrastructure and community impacts.

Recommendation 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.

Support: Yes

Officer's Commentary:

Delivery of Melbourne Metro 2, including a new train station near Precinct 15 in Altona North and reinstatement of Paisley Station, will enable greater housing capacity and liveability in Hobsons Bay. These upgrades are essential to deliver on Plan Victoria's strategic transport vision.

Supporting Evidence:

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Proposed Improvements:

Highlight the need to deliver on Melbourne Metro 2 as a priority to unlocking opportunities for housing and creation of more livable communities.

Conclusion

Hobsons Bay City Council welcomes Infrastructure Victoria's Draft 30 Year Infrastructure Strategy. While officers support most recommendations, several key considerations are noted:

- Contextual solutions are critical – particularly where legacy industrial land uses and environmental barriers exist.
- State investment is essential to unlock local infrastructure projects.
- Collaboration with councils must remain central to infrastructure decision-making processes.

Council officers thank Infrastructure Victoria for the opportunity to contribute to this important strategy and look forward to continued engagement.