



A Vibrant, Safe and Liveable City Accessible to All

Melton City Council Officer Submission
Infrastructure Victoria draft 30 year plan

Melton City Council
May 2025

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1. Introduction

Melton City Council (MCC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on Infrastructure Victoria's Draft 30 Year Strategy which follows on from our initial feedback submitted on the project in May 2023.

As you are aware, the City of Melton, in Melbourne's West, is one of Victoria's designated Growth Areas and one of the largest growth areas in Metropolitan Melbourne. The City of Melton is covered by two growth corridors the 'Western Growth Corridors' and the 'Sunbury and Diggers Rest Growth Corridor'. The City of Melton has over 13,000 hectares of land designated as Urban Growth Zone (UGZ) with a projected population over 455,980 by 2046. Forming part of the Western Region, the City of Melton along with the City of Wyndham will be home to over 1.2million people. Additionally, the City of Melton is one of four LGAs that contain the Western State Significant Industrial Precinct, the largest and most active in terms of consumption including proposed industrial land to provide significant new employment precincts into the 2040s.

The population of the City of Melton has increased by approximately 100,000 people in the past 15 years and has consistently had a growth rate of between 4-5 %. This type of growth requires considerable infrastructure and service investment across all levels of government to meet the needs of the community. The planned future growth of Melton represents a greater population than that of Hobart.

Recent updated housing targets released by the Victorian government has identified 109,000 new dwellings to be constructed in the City of Melton by 2051. These targets will place more pressure on existing services and infrastructure that in many areas is already beyond its functioning capacity.

While Melton City Council is generally supportive of the recommendations in the draft strategy, there are a number of key areas that would benefit from further strengthening. The following themes in the strategy remain a high priority for Melton.

Bus services – As outlined in Recommendation 9, Melton's existing bus network is very limited compared to other growth areas and Council strongly believes the allocation of additional services and investment must be based on an equal distribution of services rather than preferencing other areas that already have established services.

Train services – While Melton City Council welcomes announcements to improve services on the Ballarat line through the municipality, the quadruplication from Sunshine to Melton, should not stop at Caroline Springs. Without quadruplicating the line to Melton, Metro and Vline services are forced to use the same lines, impacting the frequency and travel time of trains to and from Melton. Also required are additional train stations on both the Melton and Sunbury Lines given existing train stations are at capacity and congestion to reach the stations during peak periods is already gridlocked. Additional stations are required at Mt. Atkinson and Thornhill Park on the Melton Line and Calder Park on the Sunbury line. The electrification of the Melton line also needs to be fast tracked.

Community health facilities – As the City of Melton's population increases, higher demand for a range of community and allied health services is required and often represents a higher level of disadvantage. Council notes the commitment to the Melton Hospital, however, there needs to be an on-going commitment to increase mental health services for the community. Some of these

services are specialised and not available

locally requiring people to travel outside the municipality. With higher wellbeing needs in the City of Melton, community service hubs provide a range of services in the one location, increasing accessibility enabling greater participation for greater positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

TAFE – The announcement of a TAFE in Cobblebank is an important investment in advancing education in the City of Melton and will address workforce gaps with opportunities for employers to access a local workforce of qualified trades. Melton City Council will continue to advocate for additional courses beyond construction to be offered to reflect broader community needs and existing workforce gaps in education, aged care, health, data analysis, community services and cybersecurity.

Recycled water – The City of Melton must be more resilient to future droughts and while the Western Irrigation Network provides a regional solution for agricultural users, growth areas and many open spaces assets do not have access to recycled water. Greater Western Water should further investigate the opportunity for recycled water into new estates with Precinct Structure Plans emphasising this important infrastructure. Recycled water should also be used to support increasing the green canopy as the City of Melton has the lowest tree canopy in Metropolitan Melbourne.

Flood mapping – Regular updated flooding mapping is critical for the City of Melton's growth areas. A more transparent and consistent approach is required so Council has access to the latest flood and drainage modelling. This approach would help with proper sequencing of development and identification of issues early in the planning process so delays in approving PSPs and Urban Design Frameworks plans are avoided. It will also direct the development of the transport infrastructure planning for better outcomes.

Reform of Infrastructure Contribution Plans (ICP) - A review of infrastructure contributions must not further complicate the administration of the system for growth area Councils. The review should properly consider the cost of delivering infrastructure and the cost impost that capped levies put on Council and their ability to be financially sustainable while delivering critical infrastructure to service our communities. In addition, a review into the Growth Areas Infrastructure Contributions (GAIC) is required to ensure money collected is fairly distributed and fully allocated where it is collected. Melton City Council supports the call for shared funding for the construction of regional facilities such as Aquatic Centres, Performing Arts Centres and Libraries, with State, Federal and Local Government contributing an equal share of the cost of new facilities.

Officers responses to the draft recommendations are summarised in the table below.

Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities	
Recommendation	Officer Comments
1: Build more social housing	Officers support this recommendation. Melton has some of the highest levels of disadvantage in Victoria. Consequently, demand for social housing is increasing every year particularly for 1-2 bedroom dwellings. There is a misconception that growth areas don't require social housing because new estates are affordable. This is not true. Government has a direct responsibility in providing public housing and facilitating social housing options in all areas, including growth areas where land can be purchased in advance of development.
2. Facilitate market investment in kindergarten infrastructure	Officers support this recommendation. However, while facilitating markets for private kindergarten services, it's important to acknowledge that many families express a preference for sessional kindergartens operated by local government, citing perceived quality differences. Long day care settings offer the advantage of extended care hours but this model does not meet the needs of all families. Should there be a continued shift towards private kindergarten provision, the State Government should engage in consultation with the community to identify and address perceived quality disparities between service types.
3. Plan and deliver expanded new schools	Officers support the recommendation. However, we need to see better sequencing of schools in growth areas to ensure their delivery matches surrounding development, roads, bicycle infrastructure and bus services. The experience of new schools in the City of Melton is that student numbers are in excess of original forecasts, resulting in reduced active and passive open space with installation of portables and significant traffic and parking congestion. The VPA has a responsibility to identify the location of new schools in PSP areas and to work closer with the School Building Authority. We would also like to see planning for the curriculum development so there is a balance of focus on delivery of specialised programs including STEM, creative industries and sport so that our community is prepared with the skills required for the future workforce. There is currently a lack of STEM programs and no existing Tech school. There is also 10 percent disengaged youth that are lacking opportunities for learning and development. In addition to the above, it is important to ensure sufficient planning is completed to meet the demands of secondary school provision and to also plan for and understand the emerging needs of specialist schools.
4. Expand TAFE in Melbourne's growth areas and some large regional centres	Officers support this recommendation. While funding has been approved for the new TAFE at Cobblebank, additional funds are required to provide more courses beyond the construction industries that respond to broader community training needs and address existing and future workforce gaps. The City of Melton also needs a university. Whilst this is a Federal Government

Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities	
	responsibility, Local and State Governments should be working together with industry to attract investment. The City of Melton has fewer than average number of students who progress to post secondary learning than the Victorian average and lack accessibility to existing universities given a shortfall of public transport options. Consideration should be given to alternative models in delivering TAFE infrastructure and locations to ensure better access for the community. i.e. options to include sub campuses.
5. Build libraries and aquatic centres for Melbourne's growth communities	Officers support this recommendation. The current lack of Victorian Government funding to significantly offset the costs of libraries and aquatic centres presents a challenge for growth area Councils. This disparity is particularly concerning given the historical availability of substantial grants that benefited Councils such as Casey during their growth phase. The City of Melton, for example, faces the challenge of servicing a population of over 240,000 with only two existing libraries and one aquatic centre across the large geographic area. This is concerning given the limited capacity to fund four planned additional libraries and aquatic centres due in part to the financial pressures imposed by basic infrastructure costs to deliver the other community infrastructure and open space and lacking GAIC reinvestment. Melton City Council supports the call for the cost of new aquatic and library facilities to be split equally between the Federal Government, the Victorian Government and local Councils. Significant pressure continues to be placed on council budgets to fund this type of infrastructure within a rate capped environment. Council notes there is some outdated aquatic infrastructure that will need future investment to ensure it continues to service the needs of the community.
6. Make government infrastructure more accessible	Officers support this recommendation.
7. Rezone locations near existing infrastructure for more home choices	Officers support this recommendation.
Future option - Mandate more affordable homes near existing infrastructure	Officers support this recommendation. This should not be a future option, mandating a minimum percentage of affordable housing is required now to help solve the housing crisis. The current mechanisms in planning schemes are simply not producing affordable housing outcomes that rely on developer commitments which have not materialised in established and growth areas of Melton.

Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities	
Future option - Phase out residential stamp duties	Officers support this recommendation. Councils understands this may support more supply of housing, however, a uniform residential land tax across all residential land is a financial consideration for our community.
8. Extend Melbourne's trams to encourage more new homes nearby	Officers support this recommendation.
9. Run faster bus services, more often, in Victoria's largest cities	Officers support this recommendation. Whilst the recommendation is to start redesigning bus routes in north and north-east Melbourne, the focus should be on areas like the City of Melton to deliver new bus routes to areas that are not serviced with existing bus networks and reroute the existing network to provide more direct routes getting people to their destination quicker. Additionally, with more reliable and direct routes, it will enable more frequent buses. The City of Melton's existing and growth areas have very poor services, as shown in the map with many red and grey areas showing a level of service from the bottom 10% to bottom 30%. The City of Melton has 120,000 residents without access to public transport within walking distance. This greatly disadvantages our local community to access employment and education, given there is a lack of local jobs and education. It is also noted that there is no recommendation on timing of this piece of work, as the growth in our area is so rapid, the rollout of this recommendation should be aligned to the rate of growth. Local road networks are important to be delivered in the early stages of a growth area and therefore, council seeks supports from state government to facilitate public transport access with a focus on linking collector and arterial roads. This is consistent with councils Moving Melton's transport advocacy platform - Moving Melton - Integrated Transport Strategy Melton City Council
10. Build a new bus rapid transit network	Officers support this recommendation. There are currently limited bus or train connections between the City of Melton and surrounding areas. The Infrastructure plan has made no recommendations for connections from the City of Melton to Werribee, Geelong, or Sunbury. These routes should be considered given the routes also provide connections to employment precincts. Over 70 percent of the workforce travels outside of the municipality to access employment daily to these areas, as well as the Melbourne's CBD and northern areas, including Melbourne Airport, where the majority of our residents travel for work. Additional bus connections will enable greater opportunity for these residents.
11. Extend metropolitan trains and run more service in Melbourne's west	Officers support this recommendation. Quadruplication from Sunshine to Melton should not stop at Caroline Springs. Without quadruplicating the line to Melton, Metro and Vline

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	services are forced to use the same lines, impacting the frequency and travel time of trains to and from Melton. Also, provision for new train stations must be made urgently in Mt Atkinson, Calder Park and Thornhill Park. Council recommends the electrification of the Melton line to deliver metropolitan train services and separate regional V/Line services.
12. Run more bus and coach services in regional Victoria	Officers support this recommendation.
13. Make off peak public transport	Officers support this recommendation and note that off peak lower fares would be beneficial to our community.

Victorians are healthy and safe	
14. make local streets safer for children and communities	Officers are not opposed to this recommendation. This tool could be used around town centres, schools, playgrounds and childcare centres and high-density residential areas.
15. Build safe cycling networks in Melbourne and regional cities	Officers support this recommendation. Melton has been missed from this item. The recommendations include cycling corridors to St Albans and Wyndham Vale, but nothing in between to service our community and support the arterial road network. Cobblebank Major Activity Centre should be considered as a destination.
16. Help government schools share their grounds	Officers support this recommendation. In the current context Council typically shares public open spaces, however, we encourage the state government to review its position in relation to the use of school spaces for the benefit of the wider community.
17. invest in maintenance, upgrades and expansions of community health facilities	Officers support this recommendation.
18. Build more residential alcohol and other drug treatment facilities	Officers support this recommendation. Residential treatment facilities are one important part of the service landscape for responding to alcohol and other drugs harms. Strengthening the service response in other ways, including through the health workforce that provide dedicated services, counselling and support (e.g. psychologists, general practitioners, nurses, counsellors, social workers, and youth workers) is increasingly important in the City of Melton. The City of Melton has relatively fewer medical and allied health professionals working in the alcohol and other drugs area, and a rapidly increasing population. This is particularly important given the significant impact of alcohol and drug harm on health and wellbeing, such as family violence. In the City of Melton, family violence incidents involving alcohol are more than three times the Greater Melbourne average
19. Invest in digital healthcare	Officers support this recommendation.
20. Upgrade critical public hospital infrastructure	Officers support this recommendation. Council welcomes the investment towards a new hospital in Cobblebank. Additional health infrastructure will be needed to support our growing city.
21. Better use prisons and invest more in health facilities and transition housing	Officers support this recommendation.

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

22. Invest in secure homes for Aboriginal Victorians	Officers support this recommendation. Investing in secure homes for Aboriginal Victorians is crucial to support health and wellbeing, especially considering there are currently as few as 15 Aboriginal Housing Victoria properties in the City of Melton, despite the significant proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.
23. Fund better health and wellbeing infrastructure for Aboriginal Victorians	Officers support this recommendation. Fund and start health and wellbeing infrastructure projects for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) including an Aboriginal Community Services Hub. 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.

Victoria has a thriving natural environment

24. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from infrastructure	Officers support this recommendation.
25. Advance integrated water management and use more recycled water	Officers support this recommendation. As new housing increases more wastewater has to be treated and re used which was the basis for the Western Irrigation Network. However, recycled water or third pipe infrastructure is not mandated for new greenfield subdivisions. Water authorities including Greater Western Water and the VPA should further investigate the provision of recycled water in PSP areas. Overall, there is an opportunity to deliver water infrastructure in a better way given we have time and scale to introduce more effective water use across our growth corridor. We recommend that the Victorian Government consider the following: Require rainwater tanks for residential development through the plumbing and building regulations, require greater efficiency for water services, and work with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to increase minimum water standards for appliances.
Future option – Plan for and invest in manufactured water	Officers support this recommendation.
26. Better use Victorian government land for open space and greenery	Officers support this recommendation. There is significant opportunity to increase green spaces and tree canopy in our growing suburbs provided there is a genuine commitment from the state government and servicing authorities to ensure a landscape led response to our City's growth.

Victoria is resilient to climate change and other future risks	
27. Better prepare infrastructure for climate change	Officers support this recommendation. Implementing this recommendation, including specific measures such as funding proposals for high-risk assets and promoting nature-based approaches to adaptation, would provide a much-needed boost to local government's own local and regional adaptation initiatives.
28. Use new flood maps to revise planning schemes	Officers support this recommendation. The inaction of Melbourne Water to provide updated flood mapping to the City of Melton has resulted in significant delays for the development of new housing estates, town centres and road infrastructure in growth areas. This also represents a failure of the PSP process where flooding and drainage issues approved by the VPA have been left unresolved and left for a planning panel to decide. Further, the Strategy does not include similar measures to improve management of other equally important hazards or a multi-hazard adaptation approach. It is essential to have adequate science-based data and support for evidence-based decisions around management of all climate hazards, particularly to inform comprehensive climate change risk assessments and planning.
29. Coordinate faster delivery of key energy infrastructure	Officers support this recommendation. However, proponents must undertake transparent public consultation early in the project.
30. Improve environmental assessments and site selection for energy projects	Officers support this recommendation. Too often environmental assessments are conducted late in the planning process with a pre-determined outcomes. Major energy projects need to achieve a social license by engaging early with communities and considering a triple bottom line assessment and to ensure a high degree of transparency is part of the engagement process.
31. Invest in home, neighborhood and big batteries for more energy storage	Officers support this recommendation. However, Council requires a better understanding of the make-up of locations and potential amenity impacts.
32. Determine long term duration energy storage needs	Officers support this recommendation.
33. Develop regional energy plans, guide transition from fossil gas and maintain reliable gas supply	Officers support this recommendation. We support the development of regional energy plans guiding the transition from gas. We recommend that the plans prioritise, resource and seek to enhance local generation, storage and energy sharing, supported by batteries and VPNs, and strengthened distribution networks.
34. Speed up household energy efficiency and electrification	Officers support this recommendation. We strongly support the Strategy's focus on fast-tracking electrification of residential and commercial buildings and increasing support for low-income households and social housing to ensure an equitable clean energy transition.

Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy	
35. Prepare and publish infrastructure sector plans to shape Victoria's cities	Officers support this recommendation.
36. Reform infrastructure contributions	Officers support this recommendation. The current system is complex and often unnecessarily contested at lengthy and expensive planning panels. Current infrastructure Contributions Plans (ICP) tend to allocate contributions for most forms of infrastructure well below actual costs. This discrepancy places increasing financial strain on growth area Councils, which are responsible for cost overruns. To alleviate this burden, it is recommended that the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) utilise the services of an independent quantity surveyor and incorporate realistic design parameters when establishing these costs. In addition, where local governments have employed economical designs and obtained competitive market pricing, a mechanism should be established to enable applications to the State Government to pay for the cost overrun. Further, ultimate populations in growth areas have surpassed initial precinct structure plan projections, rendering the initially planned infrastructure less adequate. Local governments face financial constraints, relying heavily on DCPs and ICPs, which are levied per hectare, despite infrastructure demand being primarily driven on a per person basis.
37. Improve asset management of all government infrastructure	Officers support this recommendation. The Victorian Government should adopt a 'betterment' approach to improve resilience, rather than 'like-for-like' replacement of assets. There should also be recommendations specifically to improve the climate resilience of roads, footpaths and drainage as well as buildings and green infrastructure – critical infrastructure managed by local government.
38. Prepare for more recycling and waste infrastructure	Officers support this recommendation. There also needs to be investment in waste management alternatives including waste to energy given waste and alternatives to landfill is a significant issue for all council areas. Additionally, recommendations for the management of illegally dumped rubbish need to be developed to increase education, reduce cost and minimise the impact. It is imperative that the waste hierarchy continue to underpin circular economy and waste management, with avoidance as the first critical element. The Infrastructure Strategy should include measures to treat the cause of waste generation, not simply the outcomes.
39. Use digital technologies to better design, build, operate and maintain government infrastructure	Officers support this recommendation.
40. Use modern traffic control technology for efficient and safe journeys	Officers support this recommendation.

Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy	
Future option – charge people fairly to use roads	Not currently supported in the current growth context as there are very limited transport options available to our growing community. The City of Melton residents are already greatly disadvantaged by lacking public transport alternatives, limited local jobs, services and education, requiring them to use cars and travel greater distances. If this recommendation is adopted there will be a need for major investment in public and active transport within the City of Melton to provide a viable alternative to driving before charging more for general use. This recommendation leads to increased disadvantage because of the lack of infrastructure. Discounts for low-income or vulnerable people in rural areas is needed. Support for cheaper tolls in off-peak times to encourage spreading out peak traffic congestion.
41. Make rail freight competitive, reliable and efficient	Officers support this recommendation. This recommendation also needs to consider the Western Interstate Freight Terminal (WIFT) as it is the location of 50 percent of all freight movements leading to congestion into the Port of Melbourne and Dynon precinct from the west and south-east. Investment in the WIFT and the supporting Outer Metropolitan Ring (Road and Rail) will also increase productivity and efficiency for the freight industry.
42. Encourage off-peak freight delivery in urban areas	Officers support this recommendation.
Future option – Plan for more efficient and sustainable urban freight	Officers support this recommendation.
43. Create and preserve opportunities for future major infrastructure projects	Officers support this recommendation. The Suburban Rail Loop is not captured in this document, and Outer Metropolitan Ring (OMR) is only identified for future planning. Joint investment is needed for the delivery of the OMR that connects 5 local council areas, bypasses the CBD for regional and growth areas and provides public transport to the outer growth areas of the North and West of Melbourne. The Western Ring Road is already at capacity. The establishment of the Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal will put significant traffic impact once operational, urgently needing the North and West connection and to the regional centres. We suggest a review of short-term connections between Melton, Werribee and Sunbury. In the Melton context it is also important to acknowledge the WIFT and its transformational impact on freight in Melbourne's west and its role in the National Freight Network.
Future option - Reconfigure the City Loop for more frequent and reliable trains	Officers support this recommendation.

