

Submission form: Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy

Your details

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Organisation (if applicable):	Victoria University
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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): Click or tap here to enter text.

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	

Your feedback

Add as many sections as you need to provide all your feedback in this submission.

Topic/area:	Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities
Recommendation name:	Rezone locations near existing infrastructure for more home choices
Recommendation number:	7
1. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
2. Tell us why	We support Recommendation 7 because rezoning land near existing infrastructure is a more equitable and efficient approach to urban development. It facilitates new housing being built where people can already access essential services such as public transport, schools, healthcare, and recreational spaces. From a health equity perspective, proximity to existing infrastructure improves access to the social determinants of health—including education, employment, healthcare, social connection, and active transport options. This, in turn, can reduce geographic and socioeconomic health inequalities that are exacerbated when lower-income households are pushed to urban fringes with poor infrastructure access.
3. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Our published research provides strong evidence that locating housing near existing infrastructure can reduce health inequalities. For example, forced car dependence among those in low-income households can contribute to poorer health outcomes by limiting access to jobs, services, and health-promoting environments (Rachele et al., 2018), and highlights how planning decisions that reinforce car dependence can entrench disadvantage. Our work has also shown that improvements in neighbourhood walkability are associated with healthier body weight outcomes, especially for those who relocate to more walkable areas (Rachele et al., 2024). Walkability and access to transport infrastructure also have the potential to narrow socioeconomic inequalities in physical function among older adults (Loh et al., 2019) and help explain differences in transport walking by age across neighbourhood types (Ghani et al., 2018). Our research also shows that improving access to quality greenspace can reduce socioeconomic inequalities in obesity (Zhang et al., 2024), while public transport access can facilitate healthcare use among adults with disabilities (Badji et al., 2021). These studies demonstrate the health equity gains of compact urban development, and support Recommendation 7. References Badji, S., Badland, H., Rachele, J. N., & Petrie, D. (2021). Public transport availability and healthcare use for Australian adults aged

	18–60 years, with and without disabilities. <i>Journal of Transport & Health</i>, 20, 101001. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2020.101001 Ghani, F., Rachele, J. N., Loh, V. H. Y., Washington, S., & Turrell, G. (2018). Do differences in built environments explain age differences in transport walking across neighbourhoods? <i>Journal of Transport & Health</i>, 9, 83–95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2018.02.009 Loh, V. H. Y., Rachele, J. N., Brown, W. J., Ghani, F., Washington, S., & Turrell, G. (2019). The potential for walkability to narrow neighbourhood socioeconomic inequalities in physical function: A case study of middle-aged to older adults in Brisbane, Australia. <i>Health & Place</i>, 56, 99–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2019.01.002 Rachele, J. N., Mavoa, S., Sugiyama, T., Kavanagh, A., Giles-Corti, B., Brown, W. J., ... & Turrell, G. (2024). Changes in neighbourhood walkability and body mass index: An analysis of residential mobility from a longitudinal multilevel study in Brisbane, Australia. <i>Health & Place</i>, 87, 103245. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2024.103245 Rachele, J. N., Sugiyama, T., Turrell, G., Healy, A. M., & Sallis, J. F. (2018). Automobile dependence: A contributing factor to poorer health among lower-income households. <i>Journal of Transport & Health</i>, 8, 128–138. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2017.11.149 Zhang, B., Loh, V., Reid, R. A., Nyanhanda, T., Jamalishahni, T., Turrell, G., & Rachele, J. N. (2024). The moderating effects of greenspace on the association between neighbourhood disadvantage and obesity among mid-to-older aged Australian adults. <i>Health & Place</i>, 87, 103263. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2024.103263
4. Include proposed changes and improvements	We have two recommendations for improvements: 1. The strategy mentions monitoring the effects of rezoning, but it could be more explicit about what exactly is being monitored (e.g. % increase in housing stock, % affordable dwellings). It could also provide regular public reporting on the outcomes by location. 2. The strategy mentions that it will consult with local government, but it should also consider Embedding community co-design principles in the rezoning process to build public support, especially in areas where densification may be controversial. Co-design also ensures planning aligns with local context and cultural values. This could also be undertaken through local government in partnership with state government.
Topic/area:	Victorians are healthy and safe
Recommendation name:	Build more residential alcohol and other drug treatment facilities
Recommendation number:	18
5. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No

	☐ In part
6. Tell us why	We endorse recommendation number 18 to expand residential rehabilitation and detoxification services, particularly regarding expansion in rural regions, such as the Great South Coast, Goulburn, and Wimmera Southern Mallee, as Rural communities face significant barriers to accessing AOD services due to distance and limited infrastructure. For example, residents in eastern Mallee communities, such as Swan Hill, travel over 300km to reach the nearest detox facility in Mildura, the only residential service in the region.
7. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Creating local facilities lowers dropout rates for those seeking treatment and enhances outcomes by allowing for ongoing care (Manning et al., 2017). Facilities tailored to Aboriginal needs, developed in partnership with Indigenous communities, are essential. Research by Dudgeon et al. (2014) shows that programs designed with cultural sensitivity improve retention and results. The plan suggests that each \$1 invested yields a \$7 return, in line with global data. According to a 2020 report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, residential treatment reduces hospital admissions (by 40%) and criminal justice expenses (by 25%), leading to lasting savings for society (AIHW, 2020). Australia Institute of Health and Welfare (2020) <i>Australia's Health snapshot</i>. https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/128856d0-19a0-4841-b5ce-f708fcd62c8c/aihw-aus-234-australias-health-snapshots-2020.pdf.aspx Dudgeon, P. et al.. (2014). <i>Effective strategies to strengthen the mental health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</i>. Manning, V., Garfield, J.B.B., Best, D. et al. (8 more authors) (2017) <i>Substance use outcomes following treatment: Findings from the Australian Patient Pathways Study. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry</i>, 51 (2). pp. 177-189. ISSN 0004-8674 https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867415625815
8. Include proposed changes and improvements	Two suggestions could be offered to enhance this recommendation: 1. Embed telehealth for post-discharge support and link facilities to housing, employment, and mental health services. 2. Guarantee long-term funding for Aboriginal-led facilities and formalise partnerships with ACCOs (Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations).

Topic/area:	Thriving natural environment
Recommendation name:	Better use government land for open space and greenery
Recommendation number:	26
9. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
10. Tell us why	We support Recommendation 26 because green space has been consistently shown to reduce adverse mental health and sleep health outcomes. Expanding access to green space delivers a wide range of physical, social, and environmental benefits, and is strongly supported by evidence demonstrating its positive impact on mental and sleep health and physical functioning. From a population health perspective, equitable access to quality green space is associated with lower levels of psychological distress, reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, improved overall mental wellbeing, and better sleep health. This is important because poor sleep is both a cause and consequence of poor mental health and is linked to a wide range of chronic conditions, including cardiovascular disease, obesity, and diabetes. By prioritising accessible and inclusive open and green spaces, especially in underserved and high-growth areas, the government can reduce health inequities while creating healthier and more resilient communities.
11. Share any supporting evidence or examples	There is compelling evidence that access to green and open space is associated with better mental and sleep health outcomes, both of which are critical for population wellbeing. For example, living near green space is linked to lower levels of adverse mental health outcomes across all ages including children and elderly (Astell-Burt & Feng, 2019; Beyer et al., 2014; Nutsford et al., 2013; Vanaken & Danckaerts, 2018). The benefits are seemingly become most prominent with physically activity (Astell-Burt et al., 2013b) that in turn is associated with open and green spaces (Sun et al., 2022). Open spaces also have the same benefits across all age groups (Alderton et al., 2022; Francis et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2023). There is also strong evidence that greater exposure to green environments is associated with improved sleep quality and fewer sleep difficulties (Astell-Burt & Feng, 2020; Astell-Burt et al., 2013a; Yang et al., 2020). Given the bi-directional relationship between sleep and mental health, this highlights the importance of urban greening as a preventive health strategy. In addition, green space exposure may reduce health inequities by mitigating the effects of stress, heat, and environmental noise, which are more prevalent in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. This evidence supports Recommendation 26 and reinforce the need for a connected and accessible open space network that delivers environmental and health equity outcomes, especially in areas facing rapid growth, rising housing density, and increasing mental health challenges.

References

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12. Include proposed changes and improvements	Click or tap here to enter text.
Topic/area:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Recommendation name:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Recommendation number:	Click or tap here to enter text.
13. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ In part
14. Tell us why	Click or tap here to enter text.
15. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Click or tap here to enter text.
16. Include proposed changes and improvements	Click or tap here to enter text.

More feedback (optional)

Tell us about infrastructure challenges, gaps or opportunities not covered by the draft strategy. This can include things you think we should add to an existing recommendation, or suggestions for a new recommendation.

Please provide evidence for your suggestions. This can include data, specific examples, cost benefit analyses, surveys, or program evaluations. Also, explain how your suggestions align with the objectives of our draft strategy (see page 11 of the draft strategy).

Suggestions for new recommendations should point towards infrastructure opportunities that can deliver long-term benefits for Victorians. They should also be areas where the Victorian Government has a leading role.

Click or tap here to enter text.

