

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

Your details

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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): Traditional Owner Corporation

Your focus areas

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

Topics	Regions
<input type="checkbox"/> Across sectors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional Victoria
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Circular economy	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban growth areas
<input type="checkbox"/> Cities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melbourne
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate change	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community infrastructure	
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy	
<input type="checkbox"/> Freight	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Health	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Housing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure for Victoria's First Peoples	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transport	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water	

Your feedback

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

Topic/area:	Infrastructure for Victoria's First Peoples
Recommendation name:	Strengthen First Peoples' Infrastructure and Self-Determination
Recommendation number:	30 (Draft)
1. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part
2. Tell us why	<p>We strongly support this recommendation as it aligns with our community's aspirations for self-determination and equal outcomes. Investing in infrastructure for First Peoples is essential to closing the gaps in health, education, housing and economic opportunity. Culturally appropriate infrastructure – from health clinics to community hubs – enables Aboriginal-led service delivery that is far more effective for our people than mainstream models. As Traditional Owners of Naarm (Melbourne) and surrounds, we know that well-designed infrastructure can empower our communities: secure housing, safe places for gathering, and facilities for cultural practice all underpin improved wellbeing. This recommendation recognises that First Peoples must be partners in planning and managing infrastructure on our Country, consistent with the Victorian Government's commitment to self-determination. By embedding Indigenous knowledge and authority in decision-making, infrastructure can better reflect cultural values and custodianship of land and water. We support this vision of infrastructure as an enabler of our peoples' social and economic development, cultural revitalisation, and enduring connection to Country. It is a necessary step toward the equal outcomes and thriving communities envisioned in the draft strategy's objectives.</p>
3. Share any supporting evidence or examples	<p>Recent evidence underscores the urgency for action. A 2025 joint assessment by Infrastructure Victoria and VACCHO found 82% of Aboriginal community health facilities in Victoria need replacement or major repairs within 15 years. Over half (52%) of these buildings are already at the end of their useful life. Despite these constraints, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) deliver superior outcomes – interventions through ACCOs have 50% greater impact</p>

	<p>than if delivered by mainstream services. This proves that investing in dedicated First Peoples’ infrastructure (e.g. health clinics, housing, education centres) will amplify benefits for our community. Additionally, Aboriginal Victorians are ten times more likely to experience homelessness than other Australians, and Victoria has the nation’s highest rate of Indigenous people seeking homelessness support. These stark indicators show that without significant infrastructure investment, inequitable outcomes will persist. Empowering Traditional Owners in infrastructure planning also yields positive results – for example, the Birrarung Council model for the Yarra River has formalized co-management of a major asset, integrating cultural values into governance. This kind of partnership can be extended to other infrastructure domains. In summary, strong evidence and case studies affirm that improving and expanding First Peoples’ infrastructure is not only morally right but delivers measurable social benefits, resilience, and equity gains for all Victorians.</p>
<p>4. Include proposed changes and improvements</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guarantee Co-Governance: Ensure Traditional Owner representation in all stages of infrastructure planning, delivery and management. For instance, create formal partnership committees (similar to the Birrarung Council) for major projects to embed Indigenous knowledge in design and land use decisions. 2. Targeted Funding: Expand dedicated funding streams for Aboriginal community infrastructure (e.g. the Aboriginal Community Infrastructure Program with a long-term commitment. Prioritize critical needs like upgrading unsafe ACCO facilities and building new housing for Aboriginal families. 3. Cultural Design Standards: Incorporate cultural safety and relevance in infrastructure design. We recommend co-design processes where Wurundjeri and other First Peoples guide architects and engineers on culturally appropriate design elements (such as including spaces for ceremony, use of language and art in public infrastructure, and protecting sacred sites). 4. Capacity Building: Alongside physical works, invest in building the capacity of Aboriginal organizations to own, manage and maintain infrastructure. This could include training, jobs, and enterprise opportunities tied to infrastructure projects,

	<p>ensuring our communities gain skills and economic benefits from the investment.</p> <p>These improvements will strengthen the draft recommendation, ensuring it fully realises First Peoples' self-determination in infrastructure and delivers lasting community benefit. We believe the recommendation should explicitly commit to co-governance and culturally led solutions, not just consultation. With these changes, the Victorian Government can set a new standard for partnering with Traditional Owners, leading to infrastructure outcomes that are culturally enriching, socially equitable, and sustainable for generations to come.</p>
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Topic/area:	Housing Infrastructure
Recommendation name:	Deliver 60,000 Social and Affordable Homes
Recommendation number:	22 (Draft)
5. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part
6. Tell us why	<p>We wholeheartedly support the draft recommendation to build 60,000 new social housing homes in Victoria over the next 15 years. Access to safe, affordable and secure housing is a fundamental infrastructure need for our community. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, like many Victorians on low incomes, have suffered from the chronic shortfall in social housing. This bold program – roughly 4,000 new homes per year – is an essential step to reduce homelessness and overcrowding. It aligns with calls from numerous inquiries and Aboriginal housing advocates to address the backlog of unmet housing demand. Crucially, we commend that the strategy emphasizes building these homes in well-located areas: close to jobs, public transport, schools and services. That locational focus will ensure residents (including Aboriginal tenants) have the opportunities and support they need to thrive. Housing is not just a roof – it's foundational infrastructure for health, education, employment and community connection. For First Peoples, culturally appropriate housing can also reinforce kinship and</p>

	<p>connection to Country. By investing at this scale, Victoria can significantly close the gap in housing outcomes. We see this recommendation as viable and cost-effective – Infrastructure Victoria’s analysis shows it can be achieved with around \$5 billion per year, a cost that can be shared by state and Commonwealth funding. In summary, this recommendation is a welcome and long-overdue infrastructure priority that will deliver profound social benefits for our people and all Victorians in need.</p>
<p>7. Share any supporting evidence or examples</p>	<p>The evidence of housing need in Victoria is compelling. As of 2023, over 65,000 households are on the social housing waitlist in our state, reflecting years of underinvestment. Aboriginal Victorians in particular face an acute crisis: they are 10 times more likely to experience homelessness than other groups, and many live in severely overcrowded homes or insecure accommodation. The Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework projects that the number of Aboriginal households in Victoria will double from 23,000 in 2016 to over 50,000 by 2036 – requiring an estimated 27,000 additional homes just to meet Indigenous population growth. These statistics underscore why a large-scale build program is critical. Moreover, a parliamentary Inquiry into Housing Affordability has already backed the target of 60,000 new social homes as necessary and achievable. Infrastructure Victoria’s draft strategy confirms the feasibility: delivering 4,000 homes/year is possible with upfront capital investment and by leveraging government land and partnerships. Notably, the draft strategy also calls for partnering with Aboriginal housing providers to deliver homes for Aboriginal Victorians – an approach we strongly endorse, as Aboriginal-led housing models ensure culturally safe tenancy support and better long-term outcomes. In practice, recent initiatives like Victoria’s “Big Housing Build” have demonstrated that scaling up social housing construction can create jobs and reduce homelessness. Overall, the evidence base leaves no doubt that a 60,000-home program is both justified by need and grounded in economic sense (with cost-benefit analyses supporting it).</p>
<p>8. Include proposed changes and improvements</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Culturally Appropriate Housing: As this program is implemented, ensure a significant portion of new social housing is designed and delivered in partnership with Aboriginal communities. This means involving Aboriginal Housing Victoria and other ACCOs in design, location selection, and

management of housing for First Peoples. Such collaboration will create homes that are culturally welcoming (e.g. accommodating extended family and elders) and support community cohesion.

2. **Mix of Housing Types:** We recommend the housing built includes diverse typologies – from family houses to apartments and cluster-style community housing – to meet various needs. Dedicated housing for Aboriginal Elders and young people (especially those transitioning from out-of-home care) should be included as priority projects, developed with input from our corporation and similar stakeholders.
3. **Land Allocation and Planning Reform:** To facilitate construction, identify unused or under-used Crown and government-owned land in metropolitan and regional areas that can be fast-tracked for social housing. Streamline planning approvals by extending the Planning Scheme reforms that enabled the Big Housing Build, and rezone appropriate sites (near transport and services) for higher-density affordable housing.
4. **Long-Term Pipeline:** While the 15-year program is an excellent start, it should be embedded into a permanent pipeline. We suggest the strategy be amended to call for an ongoing Social Housing Growth Fund beyond the initial 60,000 homes. As the draft report notes, even 60,000 homes will not fully end homelessness. Victoria’s housing agency should plan for continued construction post-2040 to keep pace with population growth and gradually raise the social housing share of total housing stock (closer to the OECD average).
5. **Monitoring and Jobs:** Set targets for Aboriginal employment and apprenticeships in the construction of these homes. The building program offers an opportunity to upskill Indigenous workers in construction trades and professional roles (architecture, engineering, project management). We propose a minimum percentage of the

workforce and contracting be reserved for Aboriginal people or businesses, in line with the Victorian Social Procurement Framework. This will ensure the investment not only houses our community but also empowers us economically.

By incorporating these improvements, the recommendation will not only deliver much-needed housing but also maximize culturally inclusive and sustainable outcomes. The Wurundjeri Corporation is ready to work with government to identify suitable land on Wurundjeri Country and to co-design housing that truly meets the needs of our people. We believe housing is a fundamental right and applaud this strategic priority to make that a reality for tens of thousands of Victorians.

Topic/area:	Transport Infrastructure
Recommendation name:	Establish a Rapid Transit Bus Network in Growth Areas
Recommendation number:	10 (Draft)
9. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part
10. Tell us why	<p>We support this recommendation to significantly improve public transport in Melbourne’s fast-growing outer suburbs. A rapid transit bus network focusing on the northern, western, and south-eastern growth corridors will be a game changer for our people’s mobility and access to opportunity. Many Aboriginal community members reside in these outer areas where conventional public transport is limited or indirect. Introducing fast, high-frequency bus services with dedicated lanes and priority signalling will greatly reduce travel times to jobs, education, health services, and cultural sites. It aligns with the principle of transport equity – ensuring all Victorians, not just those in inner suburbs, have viable alternatives to private cars. From a sustainability perspective, better transit in car-dependent areas can cut vehicle emissions and promote mode shift. We also note the safety and health co-benefits: reliable transit allows people (especially youth and elders who may not drive) to stay connected socially and access essential services. The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community values caring for Country, and providing efficient public transport is part of reducing congestion and protecting the environment on our Country. Moreover, this recommendation is fiscally sensible; the strategy’s analysis shows bus rapid transit can deliver strong economic returns (benefit-cost ratio above 2.5) at a fraction of the cost of new heavy rail lines ratio.com.au. Overall, we believe a modern bus rapid transit network will significantly improve liveability and inclusion in growth areas, aligning with our aspirations for a connected, thriving community across Wurundjeri Country.</p>
11. Share any supporting evidence or examples	<p>Evidence from other jurisdictions supports the effectiveness of bus rapid transit (BRT) networks. For example, cities like Brisbane and Adelaide have implemented high-quality busways that dramatically improved travel speeds and attracted new riders. Infrastructure Victoria’s draft strategy notes that similar services in Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide offer an additional transport choice that is cost-effective and</p>

efficient. In those cases, BRT systems have delivered at least \$2.60 in benefits for every \$1 invested ratio.com.au, through travel time savings, reduced congestion, and agglomeration benefits. Closer to home, the success of Melbourne’s SmartBus routes (e.g. the orbital routes) has demonstrated strong demand for frequent, direct bus services in the middle suburbs. However, many outer urban areas still have infrequent buses with circuitous routes. According to the strategy, the plan is to “run buses more often, for longer hours, and give buses priority on the road”, as well as straighten routes for direct travel. We strongly agree – modelling shows that bus travel times can be cut sharply with those measures. Another pertinent example is the Queensland Gold Coast’s G:Link light rail combined with bus network overhaul, which greatly improved public transport uptake; a similar uplift could be achieved with BRT in Melbourne’s growth areas. Importantly, better public transport also addresses social needs: research indicates that low-income households and Aboriginal people are more likely to be transport disadvantaged, lacking private vehicles and relying on public transport. Improving services in fringe areas will benefit these groups the most, helping to reduce social isolation and unemployment. Finally, community consultations (including those with First Peoples) have consistently raised the need for better buses and local transit options in the regions. In summary, there is robust evidence base that a rapid bus network in growth corridors will yield economic, social, and environmental benefits, justifying our full support.

12. Include proposed changes and improvements

1. **Infrastructure and Service Quality:** The recommendation should ensure that the new rapid bus network truly matches train/tram-level service. We propose buses run at least every 10 minutes during peak times and 20 minutes off-peak, with extended operating hours (early morning to late night, 7 days). All rapid buses must have priority infrastructure: dedicated bus lanes or separate busways on key routes, transit signal priority at intersections, and accessible, sheltered stations. Without these features, the “rapid” aspect won’t be realized.
2. **Network Integration:** It is crucial to integrate the BRT routes with the broader transport network. We suggest creating interchange hubs where these

rapid buses connect seamlessly with existing train lines and local bus feeders. Fare integration and ticketing should make transfers easy. In addition, future extensions of tram or train lines (as mentioned elsewhere in the strategy, e.g. extending rail to Melton should be planned in concert with the bus network to avoid duplication and maximize coverage.

3. **Coverage of Key Destinations:** We recommend the network specifically connect emerging employment hubs, education campuses, health precincts, and cultural sites in outer Melbourne. For instance, routes could link growth suburbs (like Craigieburn, Melton, Werribee, Cranbourne) directly to major hospitals and TAFEs, not only to central Melbourne. This would greatly benefit residents who currently face long, multi-transfer journeys for basic services.
4. **Community Consultation and Naming:** When designing routes on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung land, engage with us on culturally significant places. Buses could be routed or named to acknowledge cultural heritage (for example, a route following a Songline or connecting important gathering places could carry a Woi-wurrung name). This would promote recognition of Country in the transport system, aligning with self-determination principles.
5. **Sustainability:** In line with emissions reduction goals, we urge the program to use zero-emission buses. The draft strategy elsewhere calls for transitioning government vehicle fleets to zero emissions – the new rapid buses should be electric or hydrogen from the outset. This will ensure the network contributes to cleaner air and climate action, reflecting our responsibility as custodians of the environment.

By implementing these improvements, the rapid transit bus network will be more effective, inclusive, and culturally respectful. We see this as a transformative project that can bind our expanding suburbs together, and we look forward to collaborating on its design – for example, providing

Wurundjeri input on stop locations to ensure access to important community facilities (like Aboriginal cooperatives, cultural centres, etc.). In summary, we strongly support Recommendation 10 and encourage the Victorian Government to fund and deliver it promptly, with the enhancements noted above to maximize its impact on mobility and social equity.

Topic/area: Infrastructure and Environment

Recommendation name: Advance Integrated Water Cycle Management

Recommendation number: 34 (Draft)

13. Do you support this topic or recommendation?
 Yes
 No
 In part

14. Tell us why

We support the intent of this recommendation – to accelerate integrated water cycle management and use more recycled water – but only in part, because we seek a stronger inclusion of Traditional Owner leadership in water planning. Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) is crucial for a sustainable and climate-resilient Victoria. It means managing the whole water cycle (rainwater, stormwater, wastewater and potable supply) in a coordinated way, which can improve water security, reduce pollution of rivers, and create greener urban environments. We agree that Victoria should “advance integrated water management and use more recycled water” as the draft strategy states. This will help our cities and towns cope with climate change impacts like droughts and flash flooding. For Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People, water is life – Birrarung (the Yarra River) and all our waterways are sacred, living entities. We have witnessed the damage caused by compartmentalized, Eurocentric water management: rivers run dry or polluted, wetlands drained, and Country thirsting. An integrated approach that respects natural water flows and cycles is much closer to our traditional practices of caring for waterways as interconnected systems. However, the recommendation as it stands does not yet explicitly empower Traditional Owners in decision-making. True IWCM must also integrate cultural water values – ensuring that Aboriginal

	<p>people can access water for cultural purposes and that our ecological knowledge informs water use trade-offs. We support the recommendation with the caveat that it be strengthened to include Traditional Owner partnerships, as this will lead to more holistic outcomes (what we call “caring for Country” in water context). In part, we also caution that “recycled water” should be pursued in ways that are safe and culturally acceptable (e.g. considering fit-for-purpose uses and community trust). In summary, we embrace IWCM as a necessary reform for resilient and healthy waterways, but improvements are needed for it to fully align with First Peoples’ rights and knowledge.</p>
<p>15. Share any supporting evidence or examples</p>	<p>There is strong evidence that integrated water cycle management yields multiple benefits. According to Infrastructure Victoria’s analysis, better use of stormwater and recycled water can significantly bolster our urban water supplies and reduce discharge to waterways. For instance, harvesting stormwater in urban areas can reduce flooding and provide water for parks and agriculture, while treating wastewater for reuse (in industry or even as purified recycled drinking water) lessens pressure on rivers and dams. The draft strategy rightly notes the need to “consider all water supply sources” and even explore recycled drinking water with pilot projects. Other states, like NSW and WA, have moved toward integrated water planning recognizing it improves drought resilience. Moreover, Traditional Owner involvement has proven valuable in water projects. A Victorian example is the Yarra Strategic Plan (2022), which, by law, integrates Wurundjeri knowledge and guardianship in managing the Yarra catchment. This co-management approach has highlighted opportunities for ecological restoration and “cultural flows” that enhance river health. Similarly, in Queensland, Traditional Owners have contributed to water sensitive urban design by identifying culturally significant wetland restoration sites (as shared in forums like the Living Waterways program. The concept of “biocultural corridors” is emerging in environmental science, recognizing that protecting and connecting waterways can simultaneously preserve biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage. For example, along Murray-Darling tributaries, Indigenous nations have mapped cultural values and species habitats together to guide water releases for the environment – a practical application of IWCM guided by First Nations. Furthermore, integrating green infrastructure (raingardens, urban wetlands) into cityscapes has been shown to cool urban areas and create healthier communities, outcomes emphasized in</p>

	<p>Infrastructure Victoria’s strategy and supporting technical reports. In short, evidence from policy trials and research consistently supports integrated water cycle management as global best practice, especially when Indigenous knowledge systems are included to ensure we care for water as a circular, living system rather than a commodity.</p>
<p>16. Include proposed changes and improvements</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Traditional Owner Co-Design: Amend the recommendation to explicitly involve Traditional Owner groups in developing and implementing integrated water management plans. For example, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung should co-author the IWCM roadmap for the Birrarung (Yarra) catchment and beyond. This co-design should ensure that cultural flows (water allocated for the environment and cultural purposes) are embedded as a core outcome alongside economic and urban water supply goals. 2. Institutionalize Co-Governance: We propose the government establish formal partnership bodies (or expand Catchment Management Authorities’ roles) to give Traditional Owners decision-making power in water infrastructure projects – such as stormwater harvesting schemes or wastewater recycling facilities. This could mirror the Birrarung Council model on a broader scale, i.e., a Water Country Council advising on all major water infrastructure with representation from each Registered Aboriginal Party. 3. Pilot Projects on Country: Support pilot demonstrations of Traditional Owner-led water projects. For instance, on Wurundjeri Country, fund a pilot to redesign an urban stormwater system using Traditional knowledge – perhaps restoring a chain of ponds or wetland in an urban creek to naturally filter water (a form of Traditional Owner-led water-sensitive urban design). This would serve as a live example of integrating cultural design principles (such as slowing water flow to let Ngarnga – water spirit – rejuvenate the land) with modern engineering. 4. Expand “Water for Country” Allocations: In parallel with technical measures, the strategy should recommend the Victorian Government pursue allocations of water for Aboriginal use (as per Closing the Gap Target 15 for water access). Ensuring that First Peoples have a share in water for

economic and cultural use will reinforce IWCM by aligning it with self-determination. For example, supporting an Aboriginal community-owned nursery that uses recycled water to grow plants for Country revegetation provides both cultural and environmental outcomes.

5. **Community Education and Transparency:** To build public trust, incorporate community engagement programs about recycled water and integrated management. We suggest involving Traditional Owners in these education efforts – for instance, public signage or digital apps can share Wurundjeri stories of local waterways, helping communities understand the natural water cycle and the need to respect it. This cultural interpretation can demystify practices like using treated stormwater for irrigation by framing them in the context of caring for Country.

By making these changes, the recommendation will better achieve a truly integrated approach – one that marries Western water engineering with Indigenous ecological knowledge. We believe this will accelerate innovation (such as nature-based solutions and sustainable reuse) and avoid repeating mistakes of the past. As custodians of the lands and waters, Wurundjeri stand ready to guide and partner on this journey. In summary, we support the push toward integrated water cycle management with the proviso that Traditional Owners are at the table, ensuring outcomes that honour cultural connections to water and deliver healthy, flowing waterways for all Victorians.

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.

Beyond the specific recommendations above, we wish to highlight several cross-cutting opportunities that are not fully addressed in the draft strategy. These innovative approaches can amplify the strategy's benefits while honouring First Peoples' knowledge and sustainability principles:

- Digital Songlines and GIS Mapping:** We encourage the use of advanced GIS mapping to incorporate Aboriginal Songlines and cultural sites into infrastructure planning. Digital Songlines projects have shown that modern technology can document and share Indigenous cultural landscapes in 3D and map form. By mapping sacred places, traditional travel routes, and stories onto planning maps, agencies can avoid harm to cultural heritage and enhance infrastructure design. For example, road or rail projects could be aligned or interpreted in ways that acknowledge these Songlines. Embracing Indigenous data sovereignty in this process (as per recent recommendations ensures that Traditional Owners control how sensitive cultural information is used. This presents an opportunity to marry cutting-edge spatial planning with the world's oldest knowledge systems, thereby enriching Victoria's infrastructure with cultural depth.
- Circular-Economy Prefabricated Housing:** The strategy rightly invests in social housing; we see a chance to do this in a circular, sustainable way. Modular prefabricated housing, designed for disassembly and reuse, can dramatically reduce waste and construction time. A recent inquiry into Australia's circular economy recommended funding demonstration projects using modular, prefabricated, and disassemble housing in First Nations communities to showcase the benefits. We echo this idea. By piloting circular prefab housing on Country (for instance, tiny-home villages or community housing built with recycled materials), Victoria can develop fast, eco-friendly solutions to homelessness. Such housing could use renewable materials (like hempcrete or plantation timbers) and be easily relocatable, aligning with both sustainability and the mobility needs of some Aboriginal families. This approach would position Victoria as a leader in green construction while meeting urgent housing needs.
- Biocultural Corridors:** We urge the government to think beyond individual projects and consider biocultural corridors – networks of land that connect ecosystems and cultural heritage sites. These corridors, often following rivers or ridgelines, allow wildlife to thrive and enable First Peoples to continue cultural practices across the landscape. For instance, linking parks, waterways, and sacred sites in Melbourne's north (such as the Maribyrnong River to Jacksons Creek to Merri Creek) could form a Wurundjeri biocultural corridor. This concept has been applied internationally to align conservation with culture. In practice, it means when planning transport or green

infrastructure, prioritize routes that restore habitat connectivity and protect Aboriginal heritage (e.g. ensure new bike trails connect to cultural sites with interpretive signage, and land-use planning preserves Songline paths as green corridors). Such corridors support biodiversity, climate resilience, and cultural continuity simultaneously.

4. **Traditional Owner-led Water Sensitive Urban Design:** We recommend expanding the role of Traditional Owners in designing green infrastructure for water management. This could include projects like urban raingardens, wetlands, and floodplain restoration led by Aboriginal ecological experts. Wurundjeri Corporation’s Narrap Team (land management crew) and others have the knowledge to incorporate traditional wetland plants and fire management to improve water health. One idea is to establish “Living Water” projects in cities, where an urban stream or stormwater drain is rehabilitated through a collaboration between engineers and Traditional Owners. As noted in water industry forums, a Traditional Owner’s perspective can inspire viewing urban streams as living ancestors in need of care. By doing so, we not only manage water sustainably (filtering stormwater, mitigating floods) but also create spaces of cultural learning and healing in urban areas. This approach exemplifies two-way learning – blending WSUD with Indigenous Design – and could be trialled at new precinct developments or as retrofits in existing suburbs.
5. **Innovative Co-Governance Models:** Finally, we see scope for the strategy to foster new co-governance arrangements across infrastructure sectors. The success of the Yarra River co-management (Birrarung Council) sets a precedent. Similar models could be adapted for other domains: for example, a “Country Planning Board” with Traditional Owner and government representatives to oversee major infrastructure plans (ensuring alignment with Country Plans and Traditional Owner values), or co-management of significant public reserves, utilities, or tourism infrastructure. Co-governance is a pillar of true self-determination. It goes beyond consultation by sharing power and responsibility. As Victoria progresses through Treaty and truth-telling, infrastructure presents an opportunity to operationalize co-governance – delivering projects in partnership with First Peoples from inception to implementation. This could involve, for instance, joint venture agreements where a Traditional Owner corporation co-delivers a renewable energy project or manages a national park visitor centre, ensuring our cultural narratives guide the visitor experience. Embracing co-governance will lead to more inclusive, place-based and enduring infrastructure outcomes.

In conclusion, we believe these cross-cutting ideas – leveraging digital innovation for cultural mapping, adopting circular economy construction methods, establishing biocultural networks, implementing water projects with traditional wisdom, and pioneering co-governance – will strengthen Victoria’s infrastructure strategy. They represent the intersection of ancestral knowledge and modern innovation. As the Traditional Owners of much of the strategy’s focus area, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people are eager to work hand-in-hand on these initiatives. By seizing these opportunities, Victoria can ensure its 30-year infrastructure vision not only delivers economic growth and resilience, but also heals Country, empowers First Peoples, and sets a global example for how infrastructure can unite, rather than divide, people and the environment.

