Melbourne’s Northern Economic Wedge Inc trading as NORTH Link Submission to

Parliament of Victoria
Inquiry into local economic development initiatives in Victoria
Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee (EDIC)

This submission responds to EDIC terms of reference:
(e) examine ways in which municipal councils and the Victorian Government can jointly support local economic development, enhance and promote employment and attract new investment, especially in localities with emerging economic potential

NORTH Link

NORTH Link represents Melbourne’s northern region and is the regional business network and advocacy group for economic and social prosperity. Our aim is to provide strategies and activities that will ensure sustainable regional growth equal to that of Melbourne and Australia.

Melbourne’s northern region

Melbourne’s north is defined as the region covering the seven local government areas of Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea and Yarra. The region is highly diverse, and its inner regions are rapidly transitioning to knowledge economy and creative industry type development as manufacturing, logistics and warehousing activities develop in the outer parts of the region.
The region has experienced population growth of 136,556 over the past ten years. Experts predict that the rate of growth will increase more significantly over the next ten years with an additional 250,000 new residents expected. This will place further pressure on already strained regional infrastructure and services.
Melbourne’s north has evolved from a manufacturing region to a knowledge economy region in which high tech manufacturing has been retained and significant research hubs are being developed. The region’s diverse and increasingly skilled residents provide an opportunity for the growth and relocation of businesses. Parts of the region such as Yarra, Northcote, Brunswick and Nillumbik are strongholds of the arts and entertainment. The region has quality residential precincts and still manages to provide affordable housing. With developing infrastructure and major assets such as Melbourne Airport, freight hubs, transport networks and the relocating wholesale markets, the growth potential for Melbourne’s north is high.
The region still retains large areas of its natural environment combined with strong lifestyle attributes.
The developing role of activity centres and Central Activities Areas such as Broadmeadows in Hume, where renewal, housing and commercial development is taking place, reduce the focus of employment and commerce from the Melbourne CBD and create new opportunities in Melbourne’s north.
These initiatives are broadening the emphasis of future development, from growth driven by core city-centric activities to a locally integrated model of commercial, industrial and residential development, strengthening existing centres in the region and developing new centres for growth.

Melbourne’s north can be described by its diversity. The region embraces diversity in built form, from among the oldest to the newest suburbs and a corresponding diversity in the culture, educational and ethnic background of its resident population. Per capita, the region is becoming wealthier in the long term.

Melbourne’s north had increased its share of Victorian GDP to 13 per cent even though it has traditionally been a manufacturing region.

☐ The region’s share of Melbourne out-of-state exports is 17.5 per cent.

Melbourne’s north is important to Melbourne’s overall economic performance, particularly as 20 per cent of the region’s out-of-state exports are for international markets.

☐ The region has strong capacity for employment growth. Improving household productivity (including skills) in Melbourne’s north would increase employment by at least 7 per cent.

☐ By 2030, the National Broadband Network (NBN) will have created productivity gains in Melbourne's north of between 7 and 12 per cent.

Attached is “Melbourne’s north: Socio-economic overview” including:
- Regional Maps
- Melbourne’s north economic update
- 10 key facts about Melbourne’s north
- Multi-million dollar developments in Melbourne’s north
- Strategic issues
- SWOT Analysis
- Key recommendations: building the region’s economic future
- Melbourne’s north: key data

NORTH Link provides strong local knowledge and partnerships with industry, education and local government. There are many areas where metropolitan councils can work jointly with state government to support local economic development for greater employment and investment to utilise these partnerships at a regional level. Examples where NORTH Link partnerships with industry, government, local government and education has required joint efforts include:

- Regional business awards and networking, see www.nbba.com.au
- Regional infrastructure and advocacy for Regional Digital Economy, signed by the seven LGAs, as attached
- Regional infrastructure and advocacy for Melbourne Wholesale Markets relocation jointly with local government, as attached
- Regional advocacy and programs for manufacturing see ‘Manufacturing in Melbourne’s north: Now and into the future’ http://www.melbournesnorth.com.au/node/84
- Commonwealth Enterprise Connect Program for the regional manufacturing through two business advisers serving the whole region through NORTH Link
- Victorian Government Regional Office on various projects, group programs and regional promotion
- Regional research and advocacy for increased office and commercial accommodation, as attached
- The CEO Institute and NORTH Link sponsored regional business syndicate groups http://www.melbournesnorth.com.au/about-north-link/ceo
- Regional advocacy for Agri-Bio Centre at La Trobe University
- Regional Trade Training Centres at Northland Secondary College and Peter Lalor Secondary College
- Regional Submissions to Productivity Commission in partnership with local government
- Other examples see, www.melbournesnorth.com.au

All of these are examples of where co-operation and collaboration within the region has resulted in a higher-level joint effort. NORTH Link would be delighted to present and discuss these further with the Economic Development & Infrastructure Committee.

Yours truly

Mick Butera
Executive Director NORTH Link