

**VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE  
TO THE REPORT OF THE  
OUTER SUBURBAN/INTERFACE SERVICES  
AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF  
AGRIBUSINESS IN OUTER  
SUBURBAN MELBOURNE**

**September 2010**

## **Foreword by Minister**

The Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee (OSISDC) of the Parliament of Victoria was requested to conduct an inquiry into the major issues relating to the production, processing and distribution of agricultural products in the interface municipalities and peri-urban areas of Melbourne.

The Government welcomes the Inquiry and has provided a Response that complements the following related statements:

- The *Future Farming* strategy;
- *Ready for Tomorrow – A Blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria*;
- *Melbourne @ 5 million*;
- *Melbourne 2030*; and
- *Securing our Natural Future* – a white paper for land and biodiversity at a time of climate change.

The Victorian Government is committed to addressing the challenges facing agriculture in peri-urban areas and elsewhere throughout the State. This commitment is set out in *Future Farming*, which emphasises the importance of agricultural productivity growth in a resource-constrained future, while remaining competitive and environmentally sustainable. The Government is continuing to refine the services and programs delivered under the strategy to ensure Victorian agricultural producers are well-prepared for the future.

The OSISDC undertook extensive consultation and research to conduct this Inquiry. The Inquiry report contains 84 recommendations covering agricultural research, agribusiness development, green wedges, land use planning and food supply chains.

The Government supports 13 recommendations in full, supports in principle 61 recommendations, supports in part 2 recommendations, and does not support 8 recommendations.

It is pleasing to note that many of the recommendations are already being addressed through Victorian Government Strategies such as Melbourne 2030 and the *Future Farming* strategy, or through the activities of the pending *Victorian Food Strategy*.

## **Background**

The Outer Suburban/Interface Services And Development Committee of the Parliament of Victoria was requested to inquire, consider and report to Parliament on the major issues relating to the production, processing and distribution of agricultural products in the interface municipalities and peri-urban areas of Melbourne.

The Terms of Reference of the Inquiry were to:

- 1) Identify the types of agricultural sectors operating in interface municipalities and peri-urban areas;
- 2) Examine the role of agribusiness in enhancing economic growth, increasing jobs and the sector's contribution towards promoting healthy, sustainable and prosperous outer suburban areas;
- 3) Investigate the role of planning in encouraging the development of agribusiness;
- 4) Analyse the options for sustainable food production, including environmental stewardship and local food production;
- 5) Investigate impediments faced by the industry to its long term growth and sustainability and recommend options to resolve these barriers;
- 6) Highlight niche and well performing sectors operating in the interface of Melbourne, with particular reference to viticulture, horticulture and sustainable agriculture;
- 7) Examine exemplary programs supported by governments (at all levels), the private sector and non-government organisations, which assist the sustainability of the agribusiness sector; and
- 8) Investigate national and international initiatives relevant to these issues.

The final report of the Inquiry was tabled in Parliament on 26 May 2010.

This document details the response of the Victorian Government to the recommendations of the OSISDC Inquiry into sustainable development of agribusiness in outer suburban Melbourne.

Responses specify whether recommendations are 'Support', 'Support in principle', 'Support in part' or 'Not support'. Where recommendations are 'Support in principle', this either means that a commitment to undertake the recommended action is contingent upon the availability of resources and consideration of competing priorities, or that the recommended outcome is supported but an alternative method of addressing the recommendation is considered more appropriate. The text following the response details current government activity in the area and proposed action to address the recommendation.

## **Abbreviations**

BSTF	Better Services to Farmers
CSIRO	Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DHS	Victorian Government Department of Human Services
DPCD	Victorian Government Department of Planning and Community Development
DPI	Victorian Government Department of Primary Industries
ENRC	Environment and Natural Resources Committee
EPA	Environment Protection Authority Victoria
ESC	Essential Services Commission
FFAP	Future Farming Advisory Panel
FFS	Future Farming strategy
GAA	Growth Areas Authority
NGEP	Natural Gas Extension Program
NSW DPI	New South Wales Department of Primary Industries
OSISDC	Outer Suburban Interface Services and Development Committee
PLANET	PLAning NETwork
PSP	Precinct Structure Plans
PVOYT	Put Victoria on Your Table
R&D	Research and Development
RD&E	Research Development and Extension
RDV	Regional Development Victoria
RIDF	Regional Infrastructure Development Fund
SPPF	State Planning Policy Framework
UGB	Urban Growth Boundary

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government ensure that future iterations of Melbourne's metropolitan strategies, including <i>Melbourne 2030</i>, recognise the importance of agriculture in the Port Phillip and Westernport region. The Committee further recommends that all metropolitan strategies clearly identify agricultural areas.</p>	<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government already acknowledges the importance of agriculture in Melbourne's hinterland, as recognised in <i>Melbourne 2030</i> and the State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF). This is supported in <i>Melbourne 2030</i> where the protection of agricultural resources in green wedges (Policy 2.4), metropolitan areas (Policy 4.1) and in rural areas (Policy 3.2) is acknowledged. In addition the SPPF in Clause 12.02-2 supports the protection of important agricultural areas such as Werribee South, Westernport and the Mornington Peninsula.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government encourages the Australian Government to develop a national approach to assist in the preservation of productive agricultural land in rapidly urbanising areas.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>A strategic review and evaluation process, using a triple bottom line perspective, is the most effective way to inform future decisions about appropriate uses of land, given the mix of natural resource values and community benefits that different land uses provide. Properly constituted strategic planning provides a basis for long term recognition of land use priorities and for managing land use zoning.</p> <p>Factors such as land capability mapping (including soil and agricultural capability) and infrastructure requirements (water, transport, etc) would be important inputs to this strategic evaluation.</p> <p>The Victorian Government is already progressing national consideration of land use planning as part of the agricultural productivity agenda at the Primary Industries Ministerial Council under the Council of Australian Governments.</p> <p>Refer to Recommendation 11 response also.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b></p> <p>That the Department of Primary Industries, firstly, note the findings of the <i>Square Pegs in Green Wedges</i> report and secondly, in consultation with a stakeholder reference group, conduct further research into sustainable agriculture and land use in peri-urban Melbourne.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>As the author, DPI is aware of the findings of the <i>Square Pegs in Green Wedges</i> report, and particularly notes that only ten percent of Green Wedge landholders were commercial farmers. While the conduct of further research into sustainable agriculture and land use in peri-urban Melbourne may be desirable, DPI has well developed processes for determining RD&amp;E priorities for investment. These are developed in association with industry, particularly Rural Research and Development Corporations.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 3: continued.</b></p> <p>The Committee further recommends that the Department of Primary Industries take responsibility for advocating the needs of peri-urban agriculture within government.</p>	<p>DPI supports the development of agricultural systems across Victoria, including those in peri-urban areas. The \$205 million <i>Future Farming</i> strategy (FFS) is the Victorian Government's strategy for helping farm businesses become more productive, competitive and sustainable. The FFS aims to develop the capacity of farm businesses and communities to better manage risk, participate in markets, improve decision making and adopt new and improved technologies and practices.</p> <p>Peri-urban issues have been discussed by the Future Farming Advisory Panel (FFAP), a reference stakeholder panel formed under the <i>Future Farming</i> strategy. Subsequent to the FFAP, the Minister for Agriculture is examining the feasibility of establishing a Rural Futures Panel to work with farmers and other stakeholders to further discuss issues relevant to agricultural development, including in peri-urban areas.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government work with growers and gas companies to plan and deliver the extension of gas pipelines to key horticultural areas in peri-urban Melbourne, with a progress report to be provided to the Parliament.</p>	<p><b>Not support</b></p> <p>Under the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, the Victorian Government provided \$70 million under the Natural Gas Extension Program (NGEP) which provided 34 towns in regional Victoria and interface council's access to natural gas. This Program was implemented by RDV under a competitive tender process.</p> <p>A further round of NGEP funding will have a more limited reach, deliver significantly less towns and connections, and not deliver the same value for money proposition as the initial phase of the NGEP.</p> <p>The target of the NGEP has been to deliver access to natural gas to regional towns, thereby maximising the number of people and businesses with access to the gas pipeline. From these towns, it is possible for groups of regional businesses, including farms and horticulturalists, to apply to extend the pipeline to their area.</p> <p>In order to extend the natural gas network to new areas, gas distributors are required to demonstrate that such investments are economic under the Economic Feasibility Test of the National Gas Access Code. To satisfy the Economic Feasibility Test, revenue earned from the extension must cover the capital cost of the project plus a set rate of return as determined by the regulator.</p> <p>There are two main drivers that determine whether a new extension will meet this requirement: its distance from and access to the existing network and its potential load profile.</p> <p>Growth in the local region leading to increased demand for natural gas may maximise the economics of extending the natural gas network in the future.</p> <p>Alternatively, a local contribution satisfying the funding shortfall identified by the gas distributor can also improve the economic case.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> That the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Planning convene a search conference (or similar forum) no later than 2012, to discuss current issues confronting farmers and other stakeholders in peri-urban Melbourne.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The discussion of issues confronting farmers and stakeholders is supported by the Victorian Government. Exploration of these issues is already available through the Victorian Government's AgFutures Initiative. AgFutures is delivered across peri-urban areas and has provided 2 series of events in the Casey/Cardinia area.</p> <p>The Department of Planning and Community Development have also hosted two annual planning forums, funded by the <i>Future Farming</i> strategy, which provide an opportunity to explore rural planning and peri-urban issues.</p> <p>Peri-urban issues have been discussed by the Future Farming Advisory Panel (FFAP), a reference stakeholder panel formed under the <i>Future Farming</i> strategy. Subsequent to the FFAP, the Minister for Agriculture is examining the feasibility of establishing a Rural Futures Panel to work with farmers and other stakeholders to discuss issues relevant to agricultural development, including in peri-urban areas. This may provide an effective forum for the discussion of issues as proposed in this recommendation.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> That, following the above recommendation, a report of the conference/forum should be prepared with a view to establishing a Ministerial advisory body to take further action arising from the outcomes and recommendations.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>See response to recommendation 5. In the event that a Rural Futures Panel is convened, this recommendation will be forwarded to the panel for its consideration.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> That the Victorian Government endorse the recommendations contained in the Victorian Parliament's Environment and Natural Resources Committee report into the future of Melbourne's water supply, in particular their recommendations D1 to D8, which have applicability to agribusiness.*<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>Support in part</b></p> <p>(OSISDC has advised that the recommendations referred to from the ENRC Report were in fact numbered 5.1 to 5.8.)</p> <p>The Victorian Government has made its response to the inquiry of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee (ENRC) into Melbourne's Future Water Supply in State Parliament. The response was tabled on 25 March 2010, and the level of endorsement and comment stated will guide the government's action in relation to the recommendations.</p>

<sup>1</sup> The recommendations D1 to D8 of the ENRC report into the future of Melbourne's water supply is attached.

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 8:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government, building on the Western Irrigation Futures Paper, in conjunction with Melbourne Water, Southern Rural Water and other stakeholders, incorporate into the study a cost-benefit and environmental assessment of desalination options for growers in the Werribee Irrigation District.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>This option has been investigated as part of the Western Irrigation Futures project and found not to be viable. A capital investment of around \$150 million, not including long term operating costs, would be required to meet satisfactory outputs for irrigators, reduce losses and ensure sustainable soil and water management. This option would thus raise the effective delivery cost for water to Werribee Irrigation District irrigators to over \$2,000/ML.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9:</b></p> <p>That water authorities review current trade waste agreements and their effects on the quality of recycled water produced by the Western Treatment Plant.</p>	<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government undertook to review the trade waste management framework in <i>Our Water Our Future</i> (2004). The Minister for Water, the Hon Tim Holding MP, has recently approved implementation of the next steps outlined in the Trade Waste Review Final Report of July 2010. In summary, recommended reforms in trade waste management are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restate objectives in a way that defines where trade waste management should facilitate recycling, and enable conflicts arising from objectives to be resolved.</li> <li>• Appoint the Essential Services Commission (ESC) as regulator of trade waste management and introduce regulatory decision making processes that are consistent, open and timely. The ESC will develop a trade waste Code of Practice, guidelines and processes for setting prices, dispute resolution as well as arbitration arrangements.</li> <li>• Continue recent refinements in prices for treatable trade wastes and encourage water businesses to consider prices on other less treatable substances, such as salts, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Improve state-wide reporting of data on trade waste and identify waste streams available for reuse.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 10:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, including water authorities, commits to funding recycled water schemes for agriculture in peri-urban areas.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government supports such projects when they are economically viable, the water is fit for purpose and there is sufficient demand and water available. A number of projects are currently being investigated that could potentially reuse water from the Eastern Treatment Plant for irrigation purposes.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<b>Recommendation 11:</b> That Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary be stabilised to provide certainty to landholders and agribusiness.	<b>Support in principle</b> The recent expansion of Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary through Amendment VC68 will secure Melbourne's land supply for the next 20-plus years, based on current population projections. This will provide certainty for councils and landowners and will also assist in maintaining housing affordability.
<b>Recommendation 12:</b> That the Victorian Government, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders and developers, establish a program (along the lines of FarmLINK and similar programs), to identify vacant rural land suitable for agriculture in peri-urban Melbourne and arrange for its lease to farmers and community organisations seeking land.	<b>Not support</b> In a market economy, the private sector will seek out opportunities to invest and operate. Leasing of land and share farming are already viable and legitimate options available to the market. There is no need to control or intervene in these market processes. The Victorian Government sets out clear strategic directions through policy, programs and appropriate strategic land use planning studies, as a way to provide clarity and inform decision processes relating to future uses of land resources.
<b>Recommendation 13:</b> That the Victorian Government work with the Municipal Association of Victoria and relevant interface and peri-urban local governments to develop a statewide response to the issue of high rates charges for primary producers impacted by rising land values and urban growth.	<b>Not support</b> The Victorian Government notes that this recommendation is directed at local government, as rates are the responsibility of individual local government councils. The Victorian government provides policy certainty as to the state objectives for land use.

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 14:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government issue a policy statement clearly setting out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the values and long-term objectives of Melbourne's green wedges;</li> <li>the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Planning and Community Development, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, and the Department of Primary Industries in managing the green wedges; and</li> <li>the government's priorities for supporting and improving the green wedges.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>Policy statements such as <i>Melbourne 2030</i> and <i>Melbourne @ 5 million</i> already set out clear statements regarding the values and objectives of Melbourne's green wedges.</p> <p>To support these objectives, the Victorian Government has recently announced funding of \$2.5 million over 4 years for a continuing green wedges program.</p> <p>A key priority is the development of a long term strategic vision for green wedges and Melbourne's hinterland, with \$165,000 allocated for this initiative.</p> <p>Existing processes for supporting and improving green wedge areas will also be outlined within green wedge management plans that are currently under development. The Victorian Government is assisting local government in the development of these plans and views these documents as an effective mechanism for communicating the priorities for individual green wedge areas.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 15:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government develop a communication strategy to raise the profile of the green wedges among the Victorian public. The strategy should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be informed by surveys into public attitudes towards the green wedges;</li> <li>involve and showcase green wedge agribusiness;</li> <li>explain the roles of green wedges and why they are valuable; and</li> <li>use advertising, signage and other techniques to help the public identify the location of the green wedges.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government agrees that community understanding of the role and functions of green wedges is important.</p> <p>As noted in the response to Recommendation 14, the State Government has recently announced \$2.5 million over 4 years for a continuing green wedges program. \$200,000 of this funding has been allocated for the development of a green wedges communications campaign, which will involve working with local landholders, business and the community to promote, educate and encourage support for Melbourne's green wedges.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<b>Recommendation 16:</b> That the Victorian Government determine a funding model which ensures all interface councils employ – or have access to – agribusiness officers.	<b>Support in part</b> Participants in the agribusiness sector in interface council areas (and other parts of the state) may access a range of existing service provider networks, including industry-based agribusiness networks such as the Yarra Valley Agribusiness Network, specific Department of Primary Industries (DPI) -supported initiatives such as the Horticulture Industry Network and AgFutures, and other Victorian Government programs. DPI services available to farmers and industry are articulated in a series of sector service plans (available at <a href="http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture">www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture</a> ).
<b>Recommendation 17:</b> That the Victorian Government commit to providing continued support for the work of agribusiness forums in peri-urban Melbourne through the provision of advice, funding and other forms of assistance.	<b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government recognises the valuable role played by many agri-business organisation including AgriWest, Gippsland Agribusiness and the Northern Poultry Cluster. The Victorian Government has funded a range of organisations to deliver strategic industry development projects as the case for funding is established.
<b>Recommendation 18:</b> That the Department of Planning and Community Development, in view of the shortage of suitably qualified planning staff, develop options to increase the planning resources available to local governments in interface and peri-urban areas.	<b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government accepts that planning outcomes can be improved by increasing resources to local governments in interface and peri-urban municipalities. The Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) has already implemented initiatives to increase planning resources in DPCD regional offices that will assist local government. In addition through <i>Ready for Tomorrow – A Blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria</i> the government is working closely with peri-urban councils and other regional councils to accelerate strategic land use planning for settlements in non urban areas.

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 19:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government work with the Municipal Association of Victoria, town planning associations and other stakeholders to encourage the development of an additional town planning course at Victorian universities, with a focus on getting student planners to gain experience in the interface and peri-urban municipalities.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government is already active in supporting the development of the planning profession. The PLANET (PLAnning NETwork) program, for example, led by the Department of Planning and Community Development, together with the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Planning Institute of Australia, benchmarks best practice and professional standards, as a foundation to building planning skills, competencies and knowledge for planners and other users of the planning system in Victoria. The Victorian Government has also established a Planning Education Pathways Committee that includes Universities and provides support to promoting students to the planning profession.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 20:</b></p> <p>That all rural land outside the Urban Growth Boundary becomes eligible for rural grants.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>Grants are typically designed to address particular needs and focus areas.</p> <p>The Victorian Government provides a range of grants to support agribusiness and related industries. Many of these are available to applicants in interface councils.</p> <p>Grants available through Regional Development Victoria (RDV) are specifically targeted at overcoming the challenges faced by regional and rural communities and are limited to the forty-eight regional and rural councils identified in the <i>Regional Infrastructure Development Fund Act 1999</i>. In recognition that parts of interface councils can face similar challenges to regional areas, there is scope within the <i>Regional Development Victoria Act 2002</i> for some grants administered by RDV to be made available in the nine interface councils, which has been utilised in the past on a case by case basis.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 21:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government engage with Cardinia Shire Council and the Gembrook farming community to explore all options for farming and land use in the PCN and dieldrin affected Gembrook area.</p>	<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government is currently engaging with the Gembrook farming community, with recent delivery of AgFutures forums in the area and the formation of the Gembrook Region Working Group for the Northern Ranges Green Wedge Management Plan under DPCD with members from the shire council, DPI and the local community. The Victorian Government will continue to assess the need for agricultural extension services in this and other areas on a cost-benefit basis, seeking co-investment from industry where possible.</p> <p>Options for farming and land use in the PCN and dieldrin affected Gembrook area will be addressed through the Green Wedge Management Plan process, with input from the Gembrook Region Working Group.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<b>Recommendation 22:</b> That the Victorian Government work with the Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority and relevant stakeholders to establish a voluntary covenant scheme for agricultural land in Melbourne's green wedges.	<b>Not support</b> The Victorian Government recognises the role of agriculture in the green wedges. The priority for agricultural land use is established in the Green Wedge Management Plan and other development options are already limited by the Green Wedge zone.
<b>Recommendation 23:</b> That the Victorian Government review Section 32 of the Sale of Land Act 1962, with a view to strengthening the warning given to purchasers of property in rural areas.	<b>Not support</b> The Victorian Government supports measures which seek to reduce conflict between different land use types, where those measures do not impact on the ability of farmers to adapt. Changes which seek to better inform purchasers about the potential amenity impacts of nearby agriculture will reduce the potential for such conflicts. The current 'warning' ensures the onus is on prospective purchasers to undertake their own investigations of the area surrounding the property for sale. The law and warning applies for all Victorian properties whether in farming areas or not. The Victorian and local governments have recognised the need for more specific information and have produced fact sheets and booklets for prospective purchasers. Further analysis would be required to identify the best solutions to this issue before a legislative approach could be recommended.
<b>Recommendation 24:</b> That the Victorian Government update and republish its information sheets on living in rural areas and ensure these are distributed to local governments in peri-urban Melbourne.	<b>Support</b> The Victorian Government Small Landholders Information Service will provide updates on information material on living in rural areas as part of the project. This material will be presented on the DPI website and distributed to local governments and other stakeholders in peri urban areas.
<b>Recommendation 25:</b> That the Department of Primary Industries continue to conduct social research on public attitudes to farming and food issues in Victoria, with a particular emphasis on peri-urban Melbourne.	<b>Support in principle</b> DPI has conducted research in this area and intends to publish the findings. Further research will be assessed following completion of the report.

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 26:</b></p> <p>That the Department of Primary Industries partner with the Victorian Farmers Federation, VicHealth, growers and other stakeholders to develop a strategy to address perceptions of peri-urban agriculture, including but not limited to, publicity and education campaigns explaining the link between farming and fresh, local and healthy food.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government is developing a whole of Government Food Strategy, due for release in 2011. The <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i> is a whole of government initiative and will consider the issues raised in the recommendation. The Strategy will however have a broader application beyond peri-urban agriculture. The stakeholders identified in the recommendation will be consulted as part of the strategy development.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 27:</b></p> <p>That the Department of Education and the Department of Primary Industries encourage programs, along the lines of the 'Picasso Cows' and 'Archibull Prize' programs, which deliver agricultural and environmental education to school students in innovative ways. The Committee strongly recommends that schools in the growth areas of Melbourne should be a primary target for these programs.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government supports innovative delivery practices for agricultural and environmental education. Its key initiative in this regard is LandLearn, which works to enable and empower teachers to incorporate learning around agriculture into their curriculum. The learning through this method is richer and more sustainable than one off programs that need to be repeated yearly with new students.</p> <p>LandLearn has been delivered to some peri urban teacher groups through city council facilitation of professional development sessions.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 28:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government, in consultation with the Victorian Farmers Federation, industry bodies and the interface local governments, provide direct assistance to agribusinesses to implement best practice farming methods which minimise off-farm impacts on neighbouring properties.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The <i>Future Farming</i> strategy supports best farm practice and transfer of knowledge to farmers.</p> <p>RD&amp;E priorities for investment are determined through well developed processes in association with industry, particularly Rural Research and Development Corporations.</p> <p>This recommendation will be further considered against the priorities of the DPI <i>Better Services to Farmers</i>, principally that DPI will provide services where public benefits arise, and will collaborate with other service providers and industry partners.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 29:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government, local government and Australia Pacific Airports (Melbourne) meet with affected landowners in the vicinity of Melbourne Airport to resolve problems concerning the use of private aircraft for weed control purposes.</p>	<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>The Melbourne Airport Planning Coordination Forum and Community Consultative Group is the most appropriate forum for discussion and progression of issues concerning the use of private aircraft for weed control in the vicinity of Melbourne Airport. The Group consists of Victorian Government department representatives, local government, industry and Melbourne Airport representatives.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 30:</b></p> <p>That the Department of Primary Industries urgently consider declaring <i>Galenia pubescens</i> a noxious weed in view of its impact on agricultural industries (such as beekeeping) and native vegetation in peri-urban Melbourne.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government has noted the impact of <i>Galenia pubescens</i> in areas including peri-urban Melbourne and elsewhere throughout the State, and included assessment of this species as part of its current Noxious Weeds Review. The review is being undertaken by DPI in partnership with Catchment Management Authorities, and uses a risk assessment tool which assesses social, environmental and economic impacts to recommend additions to the noxious weeds register under the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act</i>.</p> <p>The current review's findings are set to be delivered shortly and will consider <i>Galenia pubescens</i> as part of the process.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 31:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government work with all stakeholders to develop strategies to reduce the fuel load on the edge of the Urban Growth Boundary and residential areas and to continue increasing funding for weed control initiatives on public and private land. The Committee acknowledges that this recommendation may need to be reviewed in light of the findings of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.</p>	<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>The Bushfires Royal Commission has in its final report set a planned burning target for the state of 5% of public land and the Victorian Government has accepted this recommendation. Further planning and consultation will be required to determine the benefits and risks of planned burning across the state, including in peri-urban areas, where issues of public safety and amenity can arise. Funding for weed control initiatives will continue to be determined primarily on a biosecurity basis.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 32:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government, in partnership with local government, investigate ways to put pressure on absentee landholders to control weeds and reduce fuel loading to ensure that the safety and economic viability of nearby agricultural operations are not compromised. The Committee acknowledges that this recommendation may need to be reviewed in light of the findings of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>All landowners including absentees have a responsibility to control certain noxious weeds (regionally controlled and regionally prohibited species) on their land. The Victorian Government takes action to enforce this responsibility, particularly where this can provide significant public benefit and support community action on weeds.</p> <p>Noxious weed risk is primarily managed on a biosecurity basis, which includes consideration of weed impacts in the form of increased fire risk.</p> <p>When assessing fire risk, the Victorian Government will consider measures for reduction of fuel loads on private land in formulating its approach to strategic reduction of fuel loads across all land tenures and vegetation types.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 33:</b></p> <p>That the Grow West model of pest and weed control be studied and expanded, where appropriate, into other areas of the Port Phillip and Westernport region.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>Grow West is an excellent example of integrated landscape management where problems such as serrated tussock, rabbits and soil erosion are addressed and the land revegetated with trees and native vegetation as part of a more sustainable form of land management. The Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authorities are well placed to progress this recommendation through their catchment planning processes.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 34:</b></p> <p>That, where dogs caught on farms can be identified (through permanent identification devices, such as microchips), the Department of Primary Industries and local councils actively enforce the strongest penalties for dog owners and organise compensation to be paid for damage or loss of livestock.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The <i>Domestic Animals Act 1994</i> provides for microchip identification of dogs (compulsory for all new registrations) and the requirement to be registered and wearing a council marker.</p> <p>If a dog is identifiable to an owner, the owner is liable for dog attack, trespass and being at large offences, and for court awarded damages (compensation) if found guilty for livestock attack. The Act is enforced by local councils.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<b>Recommendation 35:</b> That the Department of Primary Industries prepare information concerning domestic dog attacks on livestock, for interface and peri-urban local governments to distribute to dog owners with council rates notices.	<b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government currently has a declared dog register on which Councils are required by law to record the causes of a dog being declared dangerous (including attacking livestock). Councils have access to local and state-wide information from this database. The information would be available to Councils to distribute with rates notices as they see fit. In addition to this, Government is considering updating the database in 2010/11 to make it more comprehensive. Owners of livestock or their agents are empowered under the <i>Domestic Animals Act 1994</i> to destroy dogs found at large near their confined or tethered animals.
<b>Recommendation 36:</b> That all local governments consider imposing curfews for domestic animals.	<b>Not support</b> This is a local government issue to be considered on a council-by-council basis.
<b>Recommendation 37:</b> That the Environment Protection Authority change its guidelines on frost fans to ensure that acceptable noise limits in the green wedges are consistent with farming zones throughout Victoria.	<b>Support in principle</b> The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is currently finalising guidelines for noise in regional Victoria. This project looks comprehensively at the noise levels appropriate to different land zonings in country areas, based on the purpose and uses allowed for zones under the Victoria Planning Provisions. Once complete, the final approach of these new guidelines will be reflected in the frost fan guidelines. EPA notes that there are important differences between the Farming Zone and Green Wedge Zone in the emphasis given to agricultural and non-agricultural uses, which needs to be considered.
<b>Recommendation 38:</b> That the Department of Primary Industries conduct research on technology which may assist peri-urban growers to reduce the noise from frost fans and other methods of protecting crops from frost.	<b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government recognises that frost protection technologies are important in protecting crops from frost damage. RD&E priorities for investment are determined through well developed processes in association with industry, particularly Rural Research and Development Corporations. Equipment manufacturers may see opportunity in the private development of such technology that delivers a differentiated product meeting market needs.
<b>Recommendation 39:</b> That the Victorian Government, in consultation with local government, remove the requirement for primary producers to obtain a planning permit to install netting, providing that applicable building safety standards are met.	<b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government recognises the potential benefits of crop netting and supports the removal of unnecessary limitations on the ability of farmers to conduct their farming operations. Where unreasonable restrictions exist the government will work with local governments to remove those restrictions.

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 40:</b> That the Department of Planning and Community Development, in consultation with local government and the horticulture sector, remove restrictions on the proportion of land able to be covered with netting.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government agrees with the need for consultation with local governments to review restrictions on the proportion of land able to be covered with netting. Refer to response to recommendation 39 also.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 41:</b> That the Victorian Government extend eligibility for the Stock Overpass/Underpass Road Safety program to all rural areas outside the Urban Growth Boundary.</p>	<p><b>Not support</b> The Stock Overpass/Underpass Road Safety (SOURS) program was a sub-program of the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF). As part of <i>Ready for Tomorrow: A Blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria</i>, (released in June 2010) sub-programs within RIDF were consolidated. Projects of this nature would now be eligible under the <i>Infrastructure for Transport and Access</i> priority area. However, unless an infrastructure project can demonstrate a benefit to regional Victoria, RIDF grants are not available outside regional Victoria as defined in the <i>Regional Infrastructure Development Fund Act 1999</i> except for the purpose of extending natural gas through the Natural Gas Extension Program. There has been support provided to the construction of cattle underpasses in interface councils through other funding sources.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 42:</b> That VicRoads consult with the Victorian Farmers Federation and local farming communities in the planning of transport routes for new urban development where agribusinesses are likely to be affected.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b> For metropolitan growth areas the Growth Area Framework Plans will set out the location of arterial roads in the new growth areas. The Victorian Farmers Federation will have an opportunity to comment on the Framework Plans along with other stakeholders. Detailed road design will be undertaken in Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs). An opportunity is provided for public comment on the content of PSPs through exhibition. <i>Ready for Tomorrow – A Blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria</i> will develop regional land use plans that respond to a range of issues including population growth and change.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 43:</b> That the Victorian Government encourage local councils to remove or streamline the permits required by farmers moving livestock on roads, including the option of introducing longer (5-10 year) permits rather than annual permits.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government supports the streamlining of process and the removal of unnecessary regulatory burden. The Victorian Government will encourage local councils to consider streamlining process where appropriate on roads for which they are responsible. The role and function of arterial roads is such that site specific circumstances need to be carefully considered in the issuing of permits to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the road. The rapidly changing role of roads in the outer suburban areas requires careful consideration of road safety matters for existing and identified future arterial roads.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 44:</b> That VicRoads undertake a media campaign regarding livestock on roads and the responsibility of drivers to obey 'stock on road' signage and take care in agricultural areas.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>VicRoads has recently updated its '<i>Manual for Traffic control at Stock Crossings</i>' which included input from the Victorian Farmers Federation. This document was subsequently circulated to VicRoads regional offices and rural municipal councils in May 2009. VicRoads will continue to engage with key stakeholders on continued communication promoting the responsible movement of stock on roads.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 45:</b> That the Victorian Government work with local government and the Victorian Apiarists Association to review local laws in conflict with the Apiary Code of Practice 1997.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>DPI is available to assist in this process in an advisory role concerning beekeeping and crop pollination practices. There may be potential for local laws to adversely affect location of beehives for pollination of crops, particularly high value intensive horticultural bee pollination dependant crops.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 46:</b> That the Department of Primary Industries provide training for local government officers to improve awareness of the Apiary Code of Practice 1997.</p>	<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government, through DPI, will provide training for local government officers on a cyclical basis. DPI delivered a presentation to the 2009 conference of the Planning Enforcement Officers Association of Victoria.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 47:</b> That the Victorian Government recognises that the interface is a unique planning area requiring specific planning policies, resources and skills.</p>	<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises that the interface is a unique planning area requiring specific planning policies, resources and skills.</p> <p>Amendment VC66 also incorporated planning principles for Melbourne's hinterland in Clause 12 of the State Planning Policy Framework.</p> <p>This is consistent with a key goal of the <i>Future Farming</i> strategy which is for the land-use planning system to provide certainty to farm businesses and ensure that they can maintain, expand and intensify current operations while also balancing competing community demands for amenity land-use.</p> <p>The Government's <i>Ready for Tomorrow – A Blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria</i> specifically focuses on the need for coordinated planning in Melbourne's hinterland.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 48:</b> That the Victorian Government and the Growth Areas Authority ensure suitable buffer zones are established during the planning of the growth areas.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>In the preparation of Growth Area Framework Plans, the Growth Area Authority will have regard to the need for providing suitable buffers between proposed urban and non-urban uses. This includes buffers around intensive agriculture facilities, quarries, and other sensitive land uses. At the same time it is important to recognise that planning for the growth areas also needs to have regard to maximising the development capacity of areas within the new Urban Growth Boundary.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 49:</b> That the Growth Areas Authority prepare detailed guidance information to help local governments plan for urban growth and agriculture in a way that supports compatibility between land uses. This is to occur in close consultation with the Port Phillip &amp; Westernport Catchment Management Authority.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b> See response to recommendation 48. Green Wedge Management Plans and Precinct Structure Plans (PSP) provide an opportunity to consider interface issues from outside and within the urban growth boundary. Adjacent land uses, and amenity issues that result, will be considered as part of the PSP process.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 50:</b> That the Victorian Government encourages landholders in farming zones to undertake a Whole Farm Planning course before applying for a permit to construct a dwelling.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b> Several Victorian Government programs support a whole farm planning approach. The First Farm Grant which was launched under the <i>Ready for Tomorrow – A Blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria</i>, requires whole farm business planning to be completed as a first component of the grant. The Victorian Government will continue to support and encourage the adoption of whole farm planning as an integral part of good farm business practice.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 51:</b> That the Victorian Government, through the Department of Sustainability and Environment, consider establishing a 'green wedge eco tender' for green wedge landholders, along the lines of the existing BushTender program.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b> The <i>Land and Biodiversity White Paper</i> commits the Victorian Government to the investigation of new environmental markets and payments for environmental goods and services. However, further analysis would be required to establish whether there is an economic basis for a green wedge eco-tender approach. A range of approaches to influencing land use in different locations across the state will need to be tried to ensure the best mix of market-based instruments is used for the circumstances.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 52:</b> That the Victorian Government continue to invest in agricultural research and development and ensure that the Department of Primary Industries remains a robust source of advice for the industry.</p>	<p><b>Support</b> In 2008 the Victorian Government released the \$205 million <i>Future Farming</i> strategy to underpin investment in agriculture RD&amp;E. The <i>Future Farming</i> strategy is the Victorian Government's strategy for helping farm businesses become more productive, competitive and sustainable. The Victorian Government, through DPI and La Trobe University are investing \$288 million to create a world-class centre for agricultural biosciences research and development. DPI continues to align its research and development to industry concerns and to invest through partnerships with industry and other bodies to ensure that Government advice is both robust and pertinent.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<b>Recommendation 53:</b> That the Victorian Government extend funding for the Services and Information for New Landholders program and seek opportunities to expand the range of services it delivers to peri-urban landowners.	<b>Support</b> The Victorian Government has addressed these issues in the past through the Services and Information for New Landholders program, funding for which ceased on 30 July 2010. Recognising the success of the program, the Victorian Government has updated it and extended its funding for another four years under the name of the Small Landholders Information Service. This program will continue to provide targeted information and services to landowners, including those in peri-urban regions.
<b>Recommendation 54:</b> That the Department of Primary Industries establish a land management program in which experienced and/or retired farmers provide land management services to lifestyle landholders.	<b>Support in principle</b> There are a number of skills lifestyle farmers could learn from experienced retired farmers. This model is currently being trialled as part of a pilot to test the national drought reform measures in Western Australia. The Victorian Government is observing the progress of the Western Australia drought pilot with a view that aspects of the trial will be rolled out nationally.
<b>Recommendation 55:</b> That the Victorian Government work with Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab, Victorian universities and other stakeholders to establish an independent centre of agricultural innovation, along the lines of InnovatieNetwerk in the Netherlands, with a brief to design and trial innovative and challenging projects in food, farming and land use planning.	<b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government is working collaboratively with Victorian Universities, industry groups and other R&D providers (e.g. CSIRO) to design and undertake innovative projects in food production, farming systems and land use change. The Victorian Government will continue to seek collaborative arrangements to source science capability not available in-house. The Victorian Government will examine the benefits of establishing a virtual partnership similar to Innovative Network, in Holland.
<b>Recommendation 56:</b> That, in view of the high level of interest in biochar, the Victorian Government ensures that it contributes to Australian research on the issue and makes the latest information available to primary producers.	<b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government, through DPI, is undertaking research into practical methods of increasing soil carbon sequestration and rapid soil carbon measurement as part of a national R&D program. CSIRO and NSW DPI have taken a national leadership position on biochar and under the National Primary Industries RD&E framework, DPI Victoria will utilise outcomes from this early research in its own research programs.

Recommendations	Response
<b>Recommendation 57:</b> That the Victorian Government recognise the need for further investment in ongoing soil monitoring and research and the implementation of soil conservation practices.	<b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government recognises the importance of healthy and productive soils to regional industries, particularly agriculture. While practices to protect and enhance soil quality generally have a strong private benefit, DPI is currently considering expanding its capabilities in this space, recognising the likely benefits to agricultural productivity now and into the future.
<b>Recommendation 58:</b> That the Victorian Government seek opportunities to increase awareness of the benefits of using organic compost and mulch within agriculture, including progressing this as part of its compliance with the Australian Government's National Waste Policy.	<b>Support in principle</b> The use of organic compost and mulch is already common practice in a number of commercial farming systems, particularly horticulture and nurseries. The Victorian Government currently invests in composting RD&E and will consider the benefits of further investment to increase organic compost and mulch application within its established framework for determining RD&E priorities for investment.
<b>Recommendation 59:</b> That the Department of Primary Industries progressively scale-up its research, training and extension services for organic agriculture in Victoria. This should also include training for relevant departmental officers in organic agriculture.	<b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government supports the development of various agricultural systems across Victoria, including organics. The \$205 million <i>Future Farming</i> strategy is the Victorian Government's strategy for helping farm businesses become more productive, competitive and sustainable. The <i>Future Farming</i> strategy has allocated \$1.08 million over three years to assist the Victorian organic sector to develop resilience in this sector, as well as further differentiating and substantiating organic products. RD&E priorities for investment are determined through well developed processes in association with industry, particularly Rural Research and Development Corporations.
<b>Recommendation 60:</b> That the Department of Primary Industries identify and support initiatives which facilitate a greater exchange of information between organic and conventional growers.	<b>Support</b> The Victorian Government's <i>Future Farming</i> strategy has allocated \$1.08 million over three years to assist the Victorian organic sector to develop resilience in this sector, as well as further differentiating and substantiating organic products. Through this funding, the Victorian Government has provided grants to a number of projects aimed at assisting the growth of the organic sector through education, training, leadership, research and development, supply chain development and marketing. The major benefits of the current initiative have been in the development of projects providing training, education, data, and resources to organic and conventional growers. As more farms and agribusinesses adopt organic practices, the Victoria Government supports the greater exchange of information between organic and conventional growers.

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 61:</b> That the Victorian Government encourage the development of clusters of hydroponic greenhouses in those peri-urban areas which are unsuitable for soil based agriculture and have access to class A recycled water.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government supports the development of various agricultural systems across Victoria, including hydroponic greenhouses. In a market economy, the private sector will seek out a range of (agricultural) opportunities to invest and operate in those peri-urban areas that are unsuitable for soil based agriculture and have access to class A recycled water. The Victorian Government sets out clear strategic directions through policy, programs and appropriate strategic land use planning studies, as a way to provide clarity and inform decision processes relating to a range of future uses of land resources.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 62:</b> That the Victorian Government, through the Department of Primary Industries and Sustainability Victoria, support the development of technologies that enable farmers to produce their own electricity, fuels and other energy inputs</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b> The Victorian Government has a range of policies and programs that support the development of technologies that enable farmers to produce their own electricity, fuels and other energy inputs. The Victorian Government's premium feed-in tariff offers Victorians with small-scale solar photovoltaic systems of up to five kilowatts in size a guaranteed minimum credit of at least 60 cents per kilowatt hour for excess electricity fed back into the grid at any time of the day or year. To complement this program, the Victorian Government has a standard feed-in tariff available to households, community organisations and small businesses generating up to 100 kilowatts of clean electricity from wind, solar, hydro and biomass sources. The standard feed-in tariff allows farmers to sign up and receive the standard rate for any excess electricity they feed back into the State's electricity grid. In addition to these programs, there are alternative opportunities available for farmers to pursue. One emerging area is cogeneration which is a process where heat from electricity generation that would otherwise be wasted is used for other purposes like domestic and commercial heating and cooling, or for industrial processes. In Victoria, there are more than 30 sites with installed and operating cogeneration facilities. New technologies are being explored in Victoria, including a type of cogeneration that uses ceramic fuel cells. These could expand the range of sites for which cogeneration is applicable. In terms of farmers producing their own fuel and other energy inputs, the Victorian Government's <i>Victoria's Energy Future</i> notes that first generation bioenergy is only suitable for local uses due to limited supplies and feedstock being located in specific areas. DPI, through Farm Services Victoria, plays an active role in bioenergy industry support including assessment of barriers and opportunities. Second generation bioenergy technologies are at an early stage of development and the Government is exploring emerging opportunities. Targeted regional programs are also being implemented, including \$2.85 million to support the development of an advanced biofuels industry in Victoria. As more information becomes available the appropriate roles for government partnership and support will be considered.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 63:</b> That the Department of Primary Industries provide advice and practical assistance to peri-urban farmers seeking to establish Community Supported Agriculture schemes.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government supports a range of farm business arrangements that provide for viable and sustainable agribusiness, and provides information and support to farm businesses.</p> <p>RD&amp;E priorities for investment are determined through well developed processes in association with industry, particularly Rural Research and Development Corporations.</p> <p>This recommendation needs to be further considered against the priorities of the <i>DPI Better Services to Farmers</i>, principally that DPI will provide services where public benefits arise, and will collaborate with other service providers and industry partners.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 64:</b> That the Department of Planning and Community Development consult with interface local councils on amendments to the Victorian (sic) Planning Provisions to allow the direct sale of value-added produce in the green wedges. This change should be widely publicised (in cooperation with local government) to ensure producers are aware of the new rules and their associated rights and responsibilities in selling direct to the public.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>As noted in the response to Recommendation 14, State Government has recently announced \$2.5m million over 4 years for a continuing green wedges program.</p> <p>\$215,000 of this funding has been allocated for the review and implementation of green wedge planning provisions to ensure that planning controls deliver the intent of green wedge policy.</p> <p>Changes to enable the reasonable sale of value added produce in rural and green wedge areas will be considered as part of this review.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 65:</b> That the Victorian Government ease restrictions on farm shops in the green wedge zones.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>Refer to Response to Recommendation 64.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 66:</b> That the Victorian Government assist and encourage private sector and community organisations across peri-urban Melbourne to conduct studies of local food supply chains and develop provedoring or similar services, with the aim of supporting local producers and increasing the consumption of local produce.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government is developing a whole of government <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i>, due for release in 2011.</p> <p>The <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i> will consider the issues raised in the recommendation.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 67:</b> That Tourism Victoria provide funding, through peak bodies, local government or community organisations, for agritourism training programs in peri-urban Melbourne.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>Tourism Victoria does not provide funding specifically to support agritourism.</p> <p>However, support is provided indirectly to agritourism businesses through the Tourism Excellence program, funded by the Victorian Government. Priorities for Tourism Excellence are set by Regional Tourism Boards.</p> <p>Agritourism is also supported by wider marketing campaigns and supporting activities undertaken to support Victoria's food and wine sector.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 68:</b> That the Victorian Government introduce greater flexibility into the Victorian Planning Provisions to promote the development of agritourism in the green wedges.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government is working with green wedge councils to develop Green Wedge Management Plans. As noted in the response to Recommendation 14, State Government funding of \$2.5 million over 4 years will also provide further support for implementation of priority actions in adopted green wedge management plans.</p> <p>DPCD will investigate (in consultation with green wedge councils) any potential changes relating to introducing greater flexibility into the Victoria Planning Provisions to allow agri-tourism in the green wedges consistent with the Green Wedge Management Plans.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 69:</b> That the Victorian Government work with green wedge landholders and local government to expand walking trails in Melbourne's green wedge areas.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>While the Victorian Government recognises the potential benefits of increased access to green wedge land, particularly those involved in farming or agri-tourism businesses, there are a range of factors that require consideration in planning and identifying suitable areas for the expansion of walking trails including - the location of walking trails, changes in property ownership over time, insurance complications, and likely usage.</p> <p><i>Linking People and Spaces</i> (2002, under review), the Government's strategy for Melbourne's regional scale nature-based open space network, recognises that green wedge areas provide opportunities for bushwalking trails and adventure walks. The review currently underway will not alter this fundamental principle.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 70:</b> That the Department of Transport direct funding to relevant organisations, such as Bicycle Victoria, to work with local community organisations and food and wine bodies to ensure cycling trails and events promote primary producers in the green wedges.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Cycling Strategy sets out the Victorian Government's policy for investment in cycling infrastructure. As part of the Strategy, the Victorian Government regularly engages with key cycling organisations, including the Victorian Bicycle Advisory Council.</p> <p>The Government encourages efforts by these organisations to develop cycling events which benefit the local community, but does not specifically fund engagement with primary producers in green wedges.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 71:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government recognise the potential for care farming (as shown by current developments in care farming in the UK, Europe and elsewhere) and undertake a study of care farming and its applicability to Victoria, including an examination of suitable public and private funding arrangements.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government has well developed processes for determining priorities for investment.</p> <p>While the Victorian Government recognises the fact that care farming is currently being undertaken by a number of private businesses in Victoria, and that the approach offers some community benefits, it is not considered to be a priority for investment at this stage.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 72:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government adopt Sustain UK's 'Seven principles of sustainable food', for its public sector food purchasing.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The principles for sustainable food are complex and difficult to define. The Victorian Government should be focused on achieving widely adopted sustainable management practices across the food supply chain. Other government policies at both state and national levels ensure sustainable management of local fisheries and good animal welfare standards are in place.</p> <p>The Victorian Government is developing a whole of government <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i>, due for release in 2011, which will consider, among other things, how to position the food system to be safe, secure, sustainable and resilient in the future.</p> <p>The <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i> will investigate the issues raised in the recommendation.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 73:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government set gradual and achievable goals for increasing the amount of local and sustainably produced food purchased and served by departments, statutory authorities and other government bodies.</p>	<p><b>Not support</b></p> <p>As noted in Recommendation 72, the Victorian Government is developing a whole of government <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i> which is the appropriate forum for consideration of public sector food purchasing policy.</p> <p>The Victorian Government is also accountable for the efficient use of public funds and any cost implications of increasing the amount of food purchased from local producers would need to be considered. The NSW Government commissioned a study to investigate the cost benefit of a similar policy proposal, which found that the policy would increase costs and need to be funded through increased taxes on the NSW community.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 74:</b></p> <p>That the Department of Primary Industries examine the feasibility of establishing a 'Melbourne Food' brand (or similar), to identify and promote locally produced food.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government has developed Put Victoria on Your Table (PVOYT) in response to messages from industry (producers, manufacturers and processors and retailers) that the State of Victoria required a message/brand to highlight product of Victorian origin. The PVOYT brand icon is used in conjunction with a campaign designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• educate and encourage consumers to buy Victorian;</li> <li>• drive access and business opportunities for food and beverage producers into domestic markets; and</li> <li>• demonstrate State Government leadership within this sector to food and beverage industries</li> </ul> <p>The whole of state logo was designed to complement existing regional brands promoting provenance i.e., Mornington Peninsula Gourmet, Yarra Valley Regional Food, North East Valley's etc. Another tier of provenance branding may struggle to gain a foothold, and Melbourne has limited resonance as a source of food production and supply. However, food produced in Melbourne will be supported under the PVOYT brand as part of the wider Victorian program.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 75:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government support the recommendations of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing's Inquiry into Obesity, in particular recommendations 10 and 19, as stated below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rec. 10: The Committee recommends that the Treasurer and the Minister for Health and Ageing investigate the use of tax incentives to improve the affordability of fresh, healthy food and access to physical activity programs for all Australians, particularly those living in rural and remote areas.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government is developing a whole of government <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i>, due for release in 2011. Supporting communities to access, prepare and enjoy healthy foods and strengthening connections between consumers and the landscapes, people and processes that provide their food are some of the relevant issues that will be considered in this strategy. Victoria supports approaches that consider the influence of the economic environment on obesity prevention as well as other determinants, social, built and natural, consistent with its policy and planning framework Environments for Health.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 75 cont.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rec 19: The Committee recommends that the Federal Government continue to support initiatives such as community garden projects, cooking classes and the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program, in order to teach children and adults about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The benefits of growing and eating fresh fruit and vegetables; and</li> <li>Preparing and enjoying healthy nutritious meals.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recommendation 76:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government expands public awareness of the health and other benefits of eating fresh locally produced food. As part of this, the government should consider providing incentives for schools, men's sheds, community centres and community groups, to develop fruit and vegetable gardens and small farms.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government is developing a whole of government <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i>, due for release in 2011. The <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i> will consider the issues raised in the recommendation.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 77:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government work with local governments to identify available government-owned land suitable for new community gardens.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government works with local councils to identify a range of uses for public land suited for community purposes which may include community gardens. The final decision on the use of the land is the responsibility of local government and dependent on a number of factors and priorities.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 78:</b></p> <p>That the Victorian Government work with developers and local governments to ensure that space in new housing developments is allocated for community gardens.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Growth Areas Authority's (GAA) Precinct Structure Planning (PSP) Guidelines already provide guidance on the provision of and planning for local open space. The management of open spaces provided in accordance with the PSP Guidelines is the responsibility of local government. In the context of PSP preparation the GAA will draw the attention of councils and developers to the Committees recommendations in relation to community gardens.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<b>Recommendation 79:</b> That the Victorian Government encourage developers to work with local governments, gardening clubs and local schools to promote the practice of edible landscaping in new and existing communities.	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>A range of factors need to be considered in identifying land uses during a planning process. Where appropriate, edible landscaping may form one of the suitable uses, however this should not be given priority over other uses of land.</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports the use of edible landscaping where appropriate and would encourage that adequate planning takes place to ensure maintaining the landscape, and pest control are considered.</p>
<b>Recommendation 80:</b> That the Department of Planning and Community Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conduct an assessment of the Victorian (sic) Planning Provisions in regards to removing the barriers for urban agriculture in Melbourne; and</li> <li>• amend the Victorian Planning Provisions to include a zone for urban agriculture.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>Agriculture can already be considered in urban zones. Where it is appropriate, it is a matter of design that can be considered when structure plans are developed.</p> <p>It is not considered that there is sufficient justification at this time for a specific dedicated zone. There are a range of other statutory and non-statutory options that can be used to allow agriculture in urban areas where this is considered desirable.</p>
<b>Recommendation 81:</b> That the Victorian Government partner with the Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab, local government and other stakeholders to pilot an urban development project based on 'food sensitive urban design' principles in an outer suburban location.	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government, through DPI, is working collaboratively with Victorian Universities, industry groups and other R&amp;D providers (e.g. CSIRO) to design and undertake innovative projects in food production, farming systems and land use change. DPI will continue to seek collaborative arrangements to source science capability not available in-house.</p> <p>RD&amp;E priorities for investment are determined through well developed processes in association with industry, particularly Rural Research and Development Corporations. Currently, a development project based on 'food sensitive urban design' principles is not a high priority for RD&amp;E investment.</p>
<b>Recommendation 82:</b> That the Victorian Government actively engage with the Food Policy Coalition.	<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government is developing a whole of government <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i>, due for release in 2011.</p> <p>The Victorian Government, through the inter-departmental Committee for Food has already engaged with the Food Policy Coalition (now the Food Alliance) and will continue to consult with the Food Alliance as part of the development of the <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i>. The Government recognises, however, that there are a range of other stakeholders who have an important role to play in the community in relation to policy development and who will also be consulted by the Government.</p>

Recommendations	Response
<p><b>Recommendation 83:</b> That an existing government agency is allocated specific responsibility for coordinating food policy across the Victorian Government.</p>	<p><b>Support in principle</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government has recognised the broad ranging issues affecting food policy and as a result the Victorian Government is developing a whole of government <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i>, due for release in 2011.</p> <p>Led by RDV, an inter-departmental Committee has been established with senior government official representation from all agencies that have some responsibility for policy affecting food, from production to consumption. This process is to ensure a coordinated approach to food policy development.</p> <p>Future coordination and collaboration between different areas of government and stakeholders with involvement in Food Policy is one of the issues identified for consultation and discussion in the development of the <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i>.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 84:</b> That the Victorian Government develop a comprehensive food strategy for the Melbourne region which integrates agricultural policy with land use planning.</p>	<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>The Victorian Government is developing a whole of government <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i>, due for release in 2011.</p> <p>The vision for the Food Strategy is to build “a future for food that is better for all Victorians – for a healthy economy, healthy community and healthy environment”. The four key objectives of the initiative are to increase the competitiveness of Victoria’s food businesses in domestic and international markets, to improve the health of Victorians through healthier diets, support Victoria’s food system to be safe, secure, sustainable and resilient and enhance Victoria’s vibrant food culture.</p> <p>Integration of agricultural policy with land use planning across Victoria is one of the issues identified for consultation and discussion in the development of the <i>Victorian Food Strategy</i>, and is already being addressed through the <i>Future Farming</i> strategy.</p>