

CHAPTER 17: VIBRANT DEMOCRACY

Key findings of the Committee:

- 17.1** The Committee noted that 1,200 people move to Melbourne each week. According to growth forecasts by the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of Planning and Community Development, Victoria's population is now estimated to reach 6.2 million in 2020 rather than 2030 (according to the forecast, Melbourne's population will increase by one million a decade earlier than predicted).
- 17.2** The Melbourne 2030 audit revealed that the fundamental principles underpinning Melbourne 2030 to be more relevant than ever due to the pressures of increased population growth, transport congestion, housing affordability and climate change.
- 17.3** The government response to the Melbourne 2030 audit titled Planning for all of Melbourne, which addresses these challenges and sets out a framework of action required over the next five years, provides a number of initiatives that includes the targeting of \$5.6 million towards Growth Areas Authority leadership and growth areas structure planning.
- 17.4** The Committee was advised that under the Precinct Structure Planning Program, three of the 40 proposed precinct structure plans have been approved.
- 17.5** The government will direct the Growth Areas Authority to ensure that all 37 Precinct Structure Plans, currently being developed for land within the urban growth boundaries, are completed within the next four years.
- 17.6** The Committee believes that a schedule should be made public that identifies when each of the Precinct Structure Plans is expected to be completed. Final reporting should include details of the budget and costs involved in plan preparation and the expected outcomes to be derived from each plan.
- 17.7** The budget papers record a new performance measure titled 'Proportion of Precinct Structure Plans completed in accordance with adopted process'. The target set for 2008-09 is 100 per cent. The Committee believes, however, that it would be more informative to also disclose a target for the actual number of plans expected to be completed during the year.
- 17.8** In relation to the Precinct Structure Planning Program, the Committee considers that performance measures to assess whether the intended outcomes are being realised should be developed on a progressive basis as the program unfolds.
- 17.9** Audio web casting of proceedings in both the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly commenced on 19 August 2008. The capital cost of the project was approximately \$120,000 and operating expenditure in year one was estimated to be \$160,000.
- 17.10** The 2008-09 Budget includes a total of \$1.9 million in new output funding and \$3.8 million TEI in new asset funding for the webcasting of Parliament.

17.11 Additional funding needs to be provided by the government in future budgets so that video webcasting can start in the Legislative Assembly in the 2009-10 financial year and in the Legislative Council in 2010-11.

17.1 Introduction

In considering the budget estimates the Committee asked a total of 112 questions pertaining to the Vibrant Democracy vision of the *Growing Victoria Together* (GVT) initiative. This represented 22.1 per cent of all questions asked in the budget estimates hearings.

The answers provided at the estimates hearings were recorded in Hansard and the transcripts of evidence were contained in Appendix 1 of the *Report on the 2008-09 Budget Estimates – Part One* and in Appendix 1 of the *Report on the 2008-09 Budget Estimates – Part Two*.

This chapter sets out an analysis of several key issues canvassed by the Committee at the budget estimates hearings relating to the Vibrant Democracy vision of *Growing Victoria Together*.

17.2 Growth Areas Authority – expenditure associated with growth areas structure planning

17.2.1 Introduction

Established in 2006 as part of the Victorian Government's plan for outer urban development, the Growth Areas Authority oversees planning and development in Melbourne's five growth areas (see figure 17.1). Its goals are to:³⁷⁵

- develop communities that are socially, environmentally and economically sustainable;
- work with industry and local Councils to ensure economic, employment and housing priorities are achieved; and
- improve the operation of regulatory and administrative processes over time to reduce costs and increase efficiencies for developers and local Councils.

³⁷⁵ www.gaa.vic.gov.au/About Us, accessed 24 September 2008

Figure 17.1: Melbourne's five growth areas



Source: www.gaa.vic.gov.au/growth_areas, accessed 24 September 2008

The Committee, in its 2006-07 Budget estimates report, recommended that three years post implementation, an independent evaluation of the Growth Areas Authority be commissioned to examine whether it is meeting its objectives and delivering the intended outcomes to its key stakeholders.³⁷⁶ The government indicated that while monitoring occurs on an ongoing basis, a more formal evaluation would be considered after the Authority had been operating for a sufficient period of time and key elements of the new planning arrangements were in place.³⁷⁷

At the 2008-09 Budget estimates hearing, the Committee heard from the Minister for Planning that there is a commitment to maintain and monitor the extent of zoned and unzoned land in Melbourne's growth areas, particularly in the Geelong region as well as Melbourne. This will assist in supporting the Growth Areas Authority in undertaking their role and speed up the delivery of new land in these growth areas in order to accommodate the strong demand of population growth. The Committee was interested to hear that 1,200 people currently move to Melbourne each week³⁷⁸ and that according to growth forecasts by the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of Planning and Community Development, Victoria's population will reach 6.2 million in 2020 rather than 2030 (according to the forecast, Melbourne's population will increase by one million a decade earlier than predicted).³⁷⁹

The *Melbourne 2030* audit revealed that the fundamental principles underpinning *Melbourne 2030* are more relevant than ever due to the pressures of increased population growth, transport congestion, housing affordability and climate change. The government response to the audit, titled *Planning for all of Melbourne*, released on 21 May 2008, which addresses these challenges and sets out a framework of action required over the next five years, provides a number of initiatives that includes the targeting of \$5.6 million towards Growth Areas Authority leadership and growth areas structure planning.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, *Report on the 2006-07 Budget Estimates*, p.408

³⁷⁷ Government Responses to the Recommendations of Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's 70th Report on the 2006-07 Budget Estimates, p.46

³⁷⁸ Hon. J Madden, MLC, Minister for Planning, 2008-09 Budget Estimates hearing, transcript of evidence, 23 May 2008, p.3

³⁷⁹ The Office of the Premier, media release, *New zone to boost housing in growth areas*, 4 March 2008

³⁸⁰ Hon. J Madden, MLC, Minister for Planning, 2008-09 Budget Estimates hearing, transcript of evidence, 23 May 2008, p.4

Given that Victoria's population is now projected to increase by one million people by around 2020, a decade ahead of schedule,³⁸¹ this section of the chapter covers matters from an accountability perspective about what the government is planning to do in relation to Melbourne's growth areas in terms of precinct structure planning.

17.2.2 Precinct Structure Plans

Precinct Structure Plans are master plans for whole communities of up to 30,000 people. Designed to create new communities rather than just housing estates, they lay out roads, shopping centres, schools, parks, housing, employment and the connections to transport. Precinct Structure Plans can be:

- prepared and funded by council;
- council prepared with developer funding;
- developer prepared; or
- prepared by the Growth Areas Authority.

The Committee understands that a dedicated specialist planning team at the Growth Areas Authority has been formed to work in partnership with councils to complete master plans and reduce the lag time in housing and infrastructure.³⁸² The Committee stresses the importance of ensuring that the development of these new suburbs is well served by appropriate infrastructure and services.

The Committee was advised that the *Precinct Structure Planning Program* will build on the work that has already been done over the 40 precinct structure plans, three of which have been approved. These three relate to the following plans:³⁸³

- Cranbourne North Stage 1 (Casey-Cardinia growth area);
- Point Cook Homestead Road (Wyndham growth area); and
- Merrifield Central (Hume growth area).

The Growth Areas Authority is supporting councils across the growth areas to prepare the remaining 37 Precinct Structure Plans to take the pressure off places where land is scarcest. In some cases, the Growth Areas Authority is acting as an observer, facilitator or in partnership with council.³⁸⁴

³⁸¹ Hon. J Brumby, Premier of Victoria, *Melbourne 2030 Audit Speech*, 21 May 2008

³⁸² Hon. J Madden, MLC, Minister for Planning, media release, *\$9 million boost to make new communities more affordable and liveable*, 10 June 2008

³⁸³ Hon. J Madden, MLC, Minister for Planning, 2008-09 Budget Estimates hearing, transcript of evidence, 23 May 2008, p.11

³⁸⁴ www.gaa.vic.gov.au/Precinct_Structure_Plans/ accessed 25 September 2008

17.2.3 **Budget initiatives and performance measures- precinct structure planning**

The 2008-09 Budget provides \$36.6 million in output funding over four years for a package of initiatives to manage Victoria's increasing population through better planning for growing communities, the introduction of new residential zones and an increase in planning capability and capacity.³⁸⁷ Of this amount, \$5.6 million is aimed at assisting the Growth Areas Authority to focus on the delivery of precinct structure plans.³⁸⁸

The Committee noted that in relation to the Department of Planning and Community Development's output titled *Planning, Urban Design and Housing Affordability*, the budget papers record a new performance measure titled *Proportion of Precinct Structure Plans completed in accordance with adopted process*. The target set for 2008-09 is 100 per cent.³⁸⁹

While the Committee supports the introduction of the new performance measure and the target for all plans to be completed in accordance with adopted process, the Committee is of the view that it would be informative to also disclose a target for the actual number of plans expected to be completed during the year.

Recommendation 45: **To ensure that meaningful information is disclosed in the budget papers dealing with progress made in relation to precinct structure planning, the Department of Treasury and Finance ensure that the target for the performance measure titled 'Proportion of Precinct Structure Plans completed in accordance with adopted process' include the number of Precinct Structure Plans expected to be completed during the year.**

The Committee also maintains that over the ensuing years, a suite of performance measures should be developed that are directed at the effectiveness of the *Precinct Structure Planning Program* in terms of the extent to which desired outcomes have been achieved. These measures should centre on issues associated with reducing time delays in the planning process, the construction of new homes and the creation of more employment opportunities in Melbourne's growth areas. As the *Precinct Structure Planning Program* is rolled out, the Committee expects to see relevant performance measures being developed on a progressive basis and included in the Department of Planning and Community Development's annual report and budget papers where considered appropriate.

Recommendation 46: **Performance measures be developed on a progressive basis to assess the effectiveness of the *Precinct Structure Planning Program* in achieving the desired outcomes. This information be disclosed in the Department of Planning and Community Development's annual report and budget papers.**

³⁸⁷ Budget Paper No.3, 2008-09 Service Delivery, pp.343 and 345

³⁸⁸ Hon. J Madden, MLC, Minister for Planning, 2008-09 Budget Estimates hearing, transcript of evidence, 23 May 2008, p.11

³⁸⁹ Budget Paper No.3, 2008-09 Service Delivery, p.186

17.3 Audio and video webcasting of parliamentary proceedings

17.3.1 Background

Accountability to the community through unfettered access to parliamentary proceedings is central to the integrity of Australia's parliamentary system. In its *Report on Strengthening Government and Parliamentary Accountability in Victoria*, the Committee investigated the feasibility of implementing audio and video web casting of proceedings in the Victorian Parliament. As at that date, all Australian Parliaments except for the Victorian, Tasmanian and South Australian Parliaments had implemented the technology.

The Victorian Government announced in August 2007 that in 2008, it would provide funding for the live audio webcasting of all sessions of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council.³⁹⁰ This funding was to be provided to make the Victorian Parliament accessible to the public. The Committee's findings also supported this view, and audio web casting of proceedings in both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council subsequently commenced on 19 August 2008. The capital cost was approximately \$120,000 and operating expenditure in year one was anticipated to be \$160,000.³⁹¹

17.3.2 Video Webcasting of Parliament in Other Jurisdictions

Whilst the technology for the video webcasting of Parliament is complex, it is not new. Across the world, various parliaments have already implemented the technology for video webcasting. Such countries include the United Kingdom, Scotland, Wales, Germany and France. In Australia, all state parliaments have implemented audio and video webcasting, except South Australia and Tasmania. Table 17.2 outlines the status and timelines for implementation of video webcasting infrastructure in other Australian jurisdictions.

³⁹⁰ Hon. J Brumby MP, Premier, *Brumby vows to strengthen accountability in Victoria*, media release, 7 August 2007

³⁹¹ Parliamentary Departments, *Response to the 2008-09 Budget Estimates Questionnaire – additional information sought by the Committee*, received 11 September 2008, p.1

Table 17.2: Date of implementation of Audio and Video Webcasting in Australia

State	Webcasting Implemented		Date of Implementation
	Audio	Video	
Commonwealth of Australia	Yes	Yes	August 2006 (question time only)
New South Wales	Yes	Yes	Legislative Assembly commenced February 2002 Legislative Council commenced Mid 2003
Queensland	Yes	Yes	Audio broadcast commenced in July 2006 and video commenced in July 2007
South Australia	No	No	-
Tasmania	Yes	No	Audio streaming commenced in 1991
Western Australia	Yes	Yes	2007
A.C.T	Yes	Yes	November 2007
Northern Territory	Yes	Yes	August 2006

Source: Responses obtained from Parliamentary Departments across Australia, received 26 September 2008

Generally, the webcasting of parliamentary proceedings in state parliaments has been facilitated by the installation of robotic cameras within the chambers, which are operated remotely by staff employed by the parliament. The parliaments of New South Wales, the Commonwealth and Western Australia also provide the broadcast feed to the media for their use. In these parliaments, only on specific occasions are media cameras allowed into the chamber to film the proceedings, and only by express authorisation of the Presiding Officer.³⁹² The Committee believes that the Victorian Parliament should consider following in the footsteps of these Parliaments, and once the video webcasting technology becomes well established and when the quality of the feed being provided is of sufficient quality, consideration should be given to the provision of the broadcast feed to the Victorian media for their use.

No provision has currently been made for archival/automated storage and retrieval of video webcasts in Victoria. The Department of Parliamentary Services advised the Committee that (based on knowledge obtained from the Commonwealth Parliament) these services and systems are very expensive and complex, and should be the subject of a separate future project. The Commonwealth budget for the archival and storage process has been estimated at \$4 million. There are currently no other Parliaments within Australia that provide this service. The Committee believes that once the infrastructure for video webcasting is firmly established in the Victorian Parliament, a review should be conducted into the need for implementation of an archival/automated storage and retrieval service for the video webcasts, as this will provide the public with greater access to view key decisions made by Parliament.

³⁹² Broadcast of Parliament Select Committee, *Inquiry into the Queensland Parliament Video Broadcast System*, May 2008, p.6

Recommendation 47: **The Department of Parliamentary Services should review the need for implementation of an archival/automated storage and retrieval process for video webcasting recordings.**

17.3.3 Funding of the Video Webcasting Project

The committee also recommended in its report on Strengthening Government and Parliamentary Accountability in Victoria that funding be provided in the near future for the video webcasting of all Legislative Council and Assembly sessions, and other parliamentary proceedings.³⁹³ The Government's response was to support this in part as follows:³⁹⁴

“The Government has committed to the audio webcasting of all sessions of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. The Government has funded this measure in the 2008 Budget and audio webcasting commenced on 19 August 2008.

The funding will enable some of the infrastructure required for video webcasting to be made available from the outset of audio webcasting. However, prior to the introduction of video webcasting, there are significant resource and technology cost issues to resolve over the introduction of cameras and facilities for filming, which need to be balanced against the likely level of utilisation and the benefits over and above audio webcasting.

Further, the Government notes its commitment is to webcast the proceedings of both Chambers.”

The Department of Parliamentary Services advised the Committee that funding was allocated in the 2008-09 Budget for the installation of infrastructure to enable the video webcasting of parliamentary proceedings. Table 17.3 highlights the overall output and asset funding which will be provided for the audio and video webcasting.

Table 17.3: Output Funding for the Webcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings

2008-09 Budget Initiatives	2008-09)	2009-10	2010-11)	2011-12)	TEI
	(\$ million)	(\$ million)	(\$ million)	(\$ million)	(\$ million)
Output Initiatives					
Webcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.6	1.9
Asset Initiatives					
Webcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings	0.9	1.9	1.1	-	3.8

Source: 2008-09 Budget Paper No.3, Service Delivery, p. 357

³⁹³ Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, *Report on Strengthening Government and Parliamentary Accountability in Victoria*, April 2008, p.51

³⁹⁴ *Government response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee report on Strengthening Government and Parliamentary Accountability in Victoria*, September 2008, p.10

According to the Department of Parliamentary Services, the process for the installation of infrastructure to enable video webcasting has been split into two stages:

- provision of video webcasting of the Legislative Assembly; and
- provision of video webcasting of the Legislative Council.

The commencement of the video webcasting project is also subject to the completion of the current Chamber Sound Replacement Project. Parliament is in the final stages of this project to upgrade the audio capture infrastructure in both chambers of Parliament to provide a ‘clean’ stream of digital sound for Hansard and video webcasting purposes. This project has required the implementation of more refined digital sound processing, IT infrastructure upgrades, communication and storage infrastructure, development of the web interface within the constraints of stringent parliamentary security requirements and developing the skills and resource base needed to webcast both chambers during sitting periods.³⁹⁵

The Department has advised that the estimated cost for the provision of video webcasting of the Legislative Assembly is \$2.11 million, and for the Legislative Council \$1.19 million. This is broken down Table 17.4.

Table 17.4: Funding of Video Webcasting in the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council

	Legislative Assembly Funding	Legislative Council Funding
	(\$'000)	(\$'000)
Output funding (operating)	250	100
Asset Funding (capital)	1,850	1,090

Source: *Parliamentary Departments, Response to request for additional information relating to the 2008-09 Budget Estimates Questionnaire, received 11 September 2008, p.2*

The majority of the output funding requirements relate to the specialised skills needed for the operation of the infrastructure, along with an increase in the workload resulting from video processing and hence increased staffing needs.

The Department of Parliamentary Services will be seeking funds from the Government so that the first stage of the video webcasting project (completion of the installation of infrastructure in the Legislative Assembly) will be completed during the 2009-2010 financial year, and the second stage (completion of the installation of infrastructure in the Legislative Council) will be completed during the 2010-2011 financial year.

Overall the Committee believes that the Government’s plans to introduce the video webcasting of Parliamentary proceedings are a positive step towards ensuring the greater accountability of Parliament to the public.

Recommendation 48: The State Government funds in the forthcoming budgets the Department of Parliamentary Services so as to ensure the introduction of video webcasting of the Legislative Assembly proceedings in 2009-10 and the Legislative Council in 2010-11.

³⁹⁵ Parliamentary Departments, *response to request for additional information relating to the 2008-09 Budget Estimates Questionnaire*, received 11 September 2008, pp.1-2

Recommendation 49:

The Department of Parliamentary Services should conduct a follow up review to determine whether the Parliamentary web casting systems are operating effectively and whether or not the anticipated benefits of implementation are being realised.