

# VERIFIED TRANSCRIPT

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into budget estimates 2008–09

Melbourne — 23 May 2008

#### Members

Mr G. Barber	Mr G. Rich-Phillips
Mr R. Dalla-Riva	Mr R. Scott
Ms J. Munt	Mr B. Stensholt
Mr W. Noonan	Dr W. Sykes
Mr M. Pakula	Mr K. Wells

Chair: Mr B. Stensholt  
Deputy Chair: Mr K. Wells

#### Staff

Executive Officer: Ms V. Cheong

#### Witnesses

Mr J. Madden, Minister for Planning,  
Mr Y. Blacher, Secretary,  
Ms G. Overall, Executive Director, Planning, Heritage and Urban design,  
Ms P. Digby, Acting Deputy Secretary, Planning and Local Government,  
Mr S. Gregory, Chief Finance Officer, Corporate Finance, and  
Ms M. Ferrie, Director, Corporate Strategy, Department of Planning and Community Development.

**The CHAIR** — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on the 2008-09 budget estimates for the portfolio of planning. On behalf of the committee I welcome Mr Justin Madden, Minister for Planning; Yehudi Blacher, Secretary of the Department of Planning and Community Development; Genevieve Overell, executive director, planning, heritage and urban design; Prue Digby, acting deputy secretary, planning and local government; Stephen Gregory, chief financial officer; and Monica Ferrie, director, corporate strategy. Departmental officers, members of the public and the media are also welcome.

In accordance with the guidelines for public hearings, I remind members of the public that they cannot participate in the committee's proceedings. Only officers of the PAEC secretariat are to approach PAEC members. Departmental officers, as requested by the minister or his chief of staff, can approach the table during the hearing. Members of the media are also requested to observe the guidelines for filming or recording proceedings in this room.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. There is no need for evidence to be sworn. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege.

All evidence given today is being recorded. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript, and the committee requests that verifications be forwarded to the committee within three working days of receiving the proof version. In accordance with past practice the transcripts and PowerPoint presentations, and any other documents tabled, will then be placed on the committee's website. Following a presentation by the minister, committee members will ask questions relating to the budget estimates. Generally the procedure followed will be that relating to questions in the Legislative Assembly. I ask that all mobile telephones be turned off.

I invite the minister to give a brief presentation of no more than 10 minutes on the more complex financial and performance information that relates to the budget estimates for the portfolio of planning.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you, Chair. I appreciate being here and being able to present today. First of all we might start with the overheads.

#### **Overheads shown.**

**Mr MADDEN** — The Department of Planning and Community Development was established in August 2007 to lead and support the development of livable communities in Victoria through improved planning and design for sustainable communities; ensuring better access to housing, infrastructure, jobs and services; and increasing opportunities for participation.

Enhancing that livability is a key priority. It will be achieved through implementing planning reforms, delivering investments, helping support population and economic growth, and addressing the issues of disadvantage across different parts of the state. There is strong evidence to indicate that livable communities can be achieved by what works in a local context, working with local governments and communities to ensure that investments and social infrastructure are delivered in a coordinated and timely manner.

Growing Victoria remains a key policy driver within the policy. The major goals that relate to the department are growing and linking Victoria and a fairer society. DPCD also contributes to a significant and diverse range of government policy directions and priorities, including A Fairer Victoria, the Victorian indigenous affairs framework, Melbourne 2030, Sport and Recreation Victoria 2005–2010, and Future Directions: An Action Agenda for Young Victorians.

The DPCD 08–09 budget is particularly focused on meeting the budget priorities of improving urban development planning, housing affordability, with a strong continued focus on progressing A Fairer Victoria, through driving service delivery reforms, building human capital and expanding economic opportunities for those who continue to miss out.

I would like to now turn to planning. This year a number of significant initiatives have been announced in the budget. These clearly demonstrate the Brumby government's actions to address the challenges of a booming population in Victoria as well as preserving and enhancing Victoria's livability. In total, \$151.6 million has been allocated in this year's budget to the planning portfolio, which is up \$37.4 million from the 2007–08 budget, of \$14.2 million. The 2007–08 budget has been restated following the recent machinery-of-government changes, and

140.8 million has been allocated to implement government strategies for sustainable metropolitan regional development, including transit cities, and 10.8 has been allocated to heritage protection.

Melbourne 2030 was released in 2002 but Melbourne 2030 included a commitment to audit it after five years. The Melbourne 2030 audit has been successfully completed. On Wednesday I released the audit expert group's report called *Planning for all of Melbourne*, which is the government's response to the Melbourne 2030 audit.

The audit expert group found the fundamental principles underpinning Melbourne 2030 are more relevant than ever. An implementation of strategies and principles are now more urgent due to the increased population growth, transport congestion, housing affordability, climate change and peak oil. *Planning for all of Melbourne* addresses these challenges and sets the framework for action over the next five years and beyond. New funding of 24.2 is provided in the 08–09 budget for the implementation of 2030 initiatives.

As well as new funding announced under this year's state budget, two significant programs are continuing to provide direction for local government for structure planning in activity centres. The \$3 million expert assistance program continues for its second year, and this is the fourth year of the \$13.5 million Creating Better Places program. The 2008–09 state budget announced another 52 million for the successful transit cities and urban revitalisation program for three projects: \$24 million for the key revitalisation in central Geelong, 8.36 for improvements to the main street in Broadmeadows town centre, and 14.9 towards a new government services building in central Dandenong to help kick-start development and provide better services in the region.

VicUrban has an increasing focus on urban renewal in support of Melbourne 2030 and improving sustainability standards, and the major projects include Docklands, revitalising central Dandenong and Aurora — and Aurora is Australia's largest 6-star development in Melbourne's north that will be transformed over 20 to 25 years into a community of 8000 homes and 25 000 people.

The government has maintained its agenda to continuously improve the planning system. The latest of these is cutting red tape in planning. Key projects to be implemented this year include the introduction of code assist, the removal of minor matters from the need for planning approval; revised planning provisions for heritage, car parking and advertising; and the simplification of local policy. As well as that, the e-planning roadmap is an innovative five-year strategy and 1.2 million has been targeted to develop a pilot system with six councils and associated applicants and authorities.

On making local policy stronger, I have taken the immediate action to make local policy stronger by having work started on developing new residential zones for Victoria — there has been a discussion paper out — and that will include at some stage revising the state planning policy framework to make it easier to apply and simplify the local planning policy framework of all planning schemes.

New residential zones are being developed to directly align with objectives of state and local planning policies and to provide better tools for councils to, in particular, manage their communities' housing needs. I released a discussion paper in February this year and that will inform the development of the draft new zones, particularly with further extensive consultation.

The current Planning and Environment (Fees) Regulations 2000 sunset in mid-2010 and work has commenced to determine the best model for prescribing fees, and I look forward to more work in that space in the time to come.

I refer to the urban development program. There is a commitment to maintain and monitor the extent of zoned and unzoned land in Melbourne's growth areas and particularly, as well as Melbourne, in the Geelong region. That will assist in supporting the Growth Areas Authority undertaking the work they need to do and speed up the delivery of new land in these growth areas in order to accommodate the strong demand of population growth, with 1200 people moving to Melbourne each week. There is significant work taking place in that area.

In terms of regional Victoria, 500 000 was allocated in last year's budget to assist five regional cities with planning for growth and, in addition, we have committed further funding this year to initiatives right across Victoria, and no doubt that will have a significant impact on regional Victoria.

On the rural land use program there is \$500 000 to assist the transition arrangements for many councils to sort out the arrangements in relation to farming zones and rural land use, and also under coastal planning we have provided

\$200 000 in implementation, particularly to the Gippsland coastal councils and the Glenelg shire to undertake work that needs to be done strategically.

In terms of future farming, building on land and land use efforts in farming areas, DPCD will establish an expert group to identify and plan future scenarios for farming and farming communities, particularly in the context of climate change and other land use change processes. Funding of 3.79 million over four years will be provided to establish an expert group and support the strategic work that needs to be done, and the group will help identify barriers that need adjustment.

In terms of building activity, very quickly as we get into the last stages of my presentation, we have had a record year; 2007 was a record year for building with an increase of about 9.6 per cent on the 2006 year, with building activity reaching \$18.26 billion. Heritage Victoria is instrumental in maintaining and protecting the things we love and will continue to maintain and support local communities and councils in managing the heritage places, objects and collections through our \$2.2 million allocation in terms of grants in the 08–09 year.

Priorities for the forthcoming year, as I get to the last little bit here, Chair, briefly are: undertake a review of the Planning and Environment Act as outlined in the annual statement of government intentions; implementing the initiatives and actions identified and the government response to the Melbourne 2030 audit; continue to work with local government in the planning for activity centres; and implementing projects in priority centres through both the expert planning assistance and creating a better places program; continued investment with local government, the development industry and state agencies in the development of transit cities.

It also includes: continued support of Victoria's regions including by working together with local councils through the rural land use planning program; and ongoing implementation of the regional town development program in partnership with regional centres, as well as providing planning capacity, delivering on regional plans and other initiatives including future farms, where DPCD will establish a regional strategic planning expert group to provide advice about identifying and strategic planning for the future of farming in rural communities; continued work through the growth area authorities to streamline land rezoning and cut red tape including implementing the urban growth zone and precinct structure planning; continued implementation of the Victorian Coastal Strategy and Coastal Spaces Landscape Assistance Study; continuation of cutting red tape in planning implementation; implementation of the Victorian Housing Strategy and legislative review of the Building Regulations and Building Act to enhance consumer protection, affordable housing and equity and address sustainability and climate change.

Also: the development of improved energy efficiency and sustainability measures beyond those currently incorporated in the 5-star residential building standard, and it will be a key priority from my department in meeting the huge challenge of climate change going into the future. Thank you, Chair.

**Ms MUNT** — It is going to be a busy year.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much, Minister. There is certainly a lot on your plate. So, just to start off, you mentioned the audit of Melbourne 2030 and the government's response and, of course, funding in the budget, I think from memory, was 24 million. Can you just elaborate a bit more for us on the initiatives under the budget to implement the government's metropolitan strategy?

**Mr MADDEN** — There is no doubt a lot of discussion this week about the response to the Melbourne 2030 audit. I know that a number of members in this forum are particularly interested in our response to that. The 2030 audit was concluded with the release of the government response that I mentioned earlier, *Planning for All of Melbourne*, on 21 May 2008. The audit consisted of an analysis of recent trends, the 2006 census information and the report of the independent audit expert group chaired by Professor Rob Moodie. The expert group found 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, and *Planning for All of Melbourne* addresses these challenges and sets up the framework and the action required over the next five years. *Planning for All of Melbourne* includes the following initiatives totalling \$24.2 million over four years. They are as follows: streamlined growth area planning and approvals, 1.644 million; Growth Areas Authority leadership and growth areas structure planning, 5.568 million; simpler residential zones and housing supply, 3.242 million; targeted investment in urban renewal projects, 3.031 million; and targeted investment in urban renewal, \$10 million. Sustainable green wedges staffing and operation costs are in the order of 0.362 million, and sustainable green wedges management grants, 0.350 million.

We are introducing reforms to streamline our planning decision-making process, including a new partnership with local government, a shared partnership approach and new development assessment committees. As mentioned this week, we will make planning decisions in principal activity centres and key metropolitan areas. We will support local councils to engage communities early in the planning process about the rules of development in their local areas, and we are simplifying planning and development in activity centres through a new activity centre zone and tailored development frameworks to give communities more certainty about future development. *Planning for All of Melbourne*, no doubt, is a landmark step in the ongoing work to manage growth and ensure that Melbourne remains one of the world's most livable capital cities.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister. There are quite a few things there, and I am sure as we go along there will be further questions on the various elements.

**Mr WELLS** — Minister, I would like to refer you to page 186 of budget paper 3 in regard to transit cities, which you mentioned in your presentation. Why is the government planning for a 20 per cent failure rate — I notice that the projects are marked for 80 per cent — and does that 20 per cent failure rate comply with government policy on quality, timeliness and economic management; can the minister explain why 20 per cent of the projects are falling behind in quality and not running on time; and has there been an audit done to give reasons why there is a 20 per cent failure rate?

**The CHAIR** — Minister, particularly in regard to the estimates.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — I thought that is what it was.

**Mr WELLS** — Am I reading from the right page — page 186?

**The CHAIR** — This is the transit cities project work.

**Mr WELLS** — Yes, that is what I am referring to.

**Mr MADDEN** — I think you have misinterpreted those figures, Mr Wells. This is not about a failure rate at all. It is critical in relation to the way in which these projects are managed, rolled out and delivered, particularly issues about the delivery of the project, land acquisition, cash-flow arrangements, that those measures and those targets, because they are ongoing projects over a long period of time, deliver as much of the project as we can in any specific year, but those variables will change from time to time. To give you some examples of those, in any one precinct there will be significant infrastructure investment; there might be funding for government buildings into those projects, or as well as that there might be land acquisition in some of those locations as well. There is no doubt that land acquisition is one of those issues that is critical in terms of delivering the project, but it also has to be managed in a very sensitive way and delivered in a way in which everyone can have full confidence about the transparency of that process and confidence in the support of the local communities.

In the arrangements for the progress of the transit cities we have made inroads in a number of areas. In Dandenong in particular we have committed 290 million to revitalise central Dandenong. Of course that saw the release of the urban master plan for central Dandenong in November 2007. Land acquisitions also commenced to create a new city walk linking the station to the retail heart of Dandenong. There are some more details of the plans being finalised in relation to street works and physical works, and they are scheduled to commence early in 2009.

In Footscray, a one-stop planning shop has been opened in Nicholson Street. There have been significant mall works undertaken. Likewise in Ringwood, a precinct plan has been approved by council for the expansion of the Eastland Shopping Centre, and there has been investment in terms of the design work, particularly around the transport interchange. In Broadmeadows, again, design works and business planning around the civic plaza and public realm improvements are part of the program there. In Box Hill there is the redevelopment of the main street, the Market Street mall and public realm improvements to Bruce Street. As well as that in Frankston there are new planning controls to implement the transit cities structure plan, options for the design of the Kananook Creek boardwalk and associated works. They are on public exhibition — they were in 2007. I understand that the council delivered the final concept plan in April.

Across all of those projects there is a lot of work being undertaken. They will continue to roll out. Elements of those are not in any way a failure at all, Mr Wells. They are actually staged in a way in which we can continue to make significant progress in all of those projects.

**Mr WELLS** — Just to make sure that we are interpreting the figures correctly, if you are saying that there is an 80 per cent target, are you saying that there is an 80 per cent target that they will be completed by a certain date? Why is that figure not 100 per cent if you are so confident things are working properly?

**Mr MADDEN** — No, it is about the progress made in relation to specific nominated items along the program. So the intention is to achieve in the order of 80 per cent progress in that area, which is not to say a project will be completed in that given year. As you would understand, with all these transit cities, these are big programs for the long haul. These things will not happen overnight, and they are not one-year or two-year programs; these are, particularly in the likes of Footscray and Dandenong, significant and major urban renewal projects. The other critical component to that is bringing together investment from the private sector and other partners in order to capitalise on that investment, or leverage that investment. We think they are ambitious projects but fairly realistic in terms of the progress that will be made in any given year in relation to the elements and the attributes of the program.

**Mr WELLS** — Minister, you mentioned Ringwood. How much money has been allocated to Ringwood? I did not quite catch that.

**Mr MADDEN** — Significant amounts of money have been contributed. No doubt, they are eager to get even more money in relation — —

**Mr WELLS** — Into Ringwood?

**Mr MADDEN** — Into Ringwood, yes. I am very eager to see more money delivered to that project and am working with my colleagues to address that issue. I know some work is being done in relation to looking at some of the design aspects, particularly around not only the retail area but the transport hubs to make sure that the interaction between the transport hub, the station, the road network and the shopping centre work effectively. So I am looking forward to seeing that work finalised, and I am also looking forward to making some future announcements in relation to what funding might be available in relation to Ringwood.

**Mr WELLS** — Sorry, how much has been allocated?

**Mr MADDEN** — I am happy to provide you with that detail. I do not have it specifically in front of me, but I am happy to provide you with that detail.

**Ms MUNT** — Minister, you mentioned, I think, 24.2 million that has been put aside to fund the implementation of a number of Melbourne 2030 initiatives. As a member with a green wedge in my electorate that does have some issues. I was wondering how much of that budget will go towards green wedge policy to help maintain our public open space.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you very much, and I know you are particularly interested in many of the associated issues around green wedges and have been a very strong advocate for maintaining and protecting many of the green wedge elements, but also reflecting the views of your respective electorate in relation to this. So I am very conscious of your interest in the management of green wedges. Can I just make the point, too, Chair, that there is a definitive difference between the government's policy and the government's plan in relation to green wedge management, and the urban growth boundary, and that of the state opposition. We are committed to an urban growth boundary — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Hang on, no, he does this in the house.

**Mr WELLS** — You are committed to the boundary — —

**Mr MADDEN** — We are committed to the urban growth boundary and managing that and monitoring that. We are also committed — —

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — No, you are not. You are messing it up.

**Mr WELLS** — But you are making adjustments to it.

**The CHAIR** — Can we just have the minister, please?

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Well, if he is going to have a go at us — —

**Mr MADDEN** — And, Chair, we are also committed to working — —

**Mr WELLS** — It is an absolute debacle because you are not keeping up the interest rates on the 2030 plan.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much, Deputy Chair.

**Mr WELLS** — Why would he say something like that? It is so ridiculous.

**The CHAIR** — Deputy Chair, thank you! Can we just have one at a time. Minister, without provoking — —

**Mr WELLS** — He is talking about the state opposition's plan. I just want to know what he meant by that. Would he like to expand on that?

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much, and please try not to provoke people, Minister.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you very much. I will certainly try to couch my answers, appreciating the sensitivity of the opposition members who are here today.

**Mr WELLS** — Give us the plan on infrastructure. Chair, if you are going to let him keep going on about that we will need an explanation of the infrastructure plan for his 2030 and those growth boundary areas.

**Mr MADDEN** — Chair, all up, 23.5 million of the Melbourne 2030 budget is for initiatives that will help bring more housing to market more quickly and in the right areas. This will cater for our boom in population. So the demand for housing will contribute to improved housing affordability. Planning for more housing in our established areas and our dedicated growth areas does not directly impact green wedge policy, but it does support green wedge policy, because they are complementary. That is the point I was trying to make. In managing one you also have to manage the other, and they sit alongside each other. But if you were to not have an urban growth boundary, and we know there are some who would say that, then it is going to have a direct impact on green wedge policy. I know Mr Wells has made that point, and I know he is sensitive to that issue, but — —

**Mr WELLS** — Sorry, what did Mr Wells claim?

**Mr MADDEN** — I think in your budget reply speech last year, you said you were committed to dismantling the urban growth boundary, Mr Wells.

**Mr WELLS** — But you just said I would not have an urban growth boundary.

**Mr MADDEN** — You were going to dismantle the urban growth boundary.

**The CHAIR** — Minister, can you answer the question asked by Ms Munt, thank you.

**Mr WELLS** — You were not listening to what I said.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — You are misrepresenting Mr Wells.

**Mr WELLS** — You are clearly misrepresenting what I have said.

**The CHAIR** — I think it is not for us to sort out the — —

**Mr WELLS** — We said dismantle the 2030 boundary line — —

**The CHAIR** — Deputy Chair, thank you!

**Mr WELLS** — But you were assuming that I would not have an urban growth boundary line, and that is wrong.

**Ms MUNT** — Pleased to hear it.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — You are being dishonest.

**Mr WELLS** — No, you are misleading the committee.

**Mr MADDEN** — No, I am not misleading the committee.

**Mr WELLS** — And you are being dishonest. So I ask you to retract that, or otherwise it is going to get worse.

**Mr MADDEN** — I am happy to see, Mr Wells, that you have clarified it, that the state opposition has clarified its position on the urban growth boundary. I am very pleased to hear it.

**Mr WELLS** — If you had read it properly in the first place.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Mr Wells!

**Mr WELLS** — Pardon? What a joke! What is the point of having a public hearing if he is going to misrepresent what we are saying?

**The CHAIR** — We are having a public hearing and I would like you to restrain yourself. And, Minister, can you restrain yourself and confine yourself to answering the question asked by Ms Munt?

**Mr WELLS** — If he continues to mislead what I am saying or what I have said in the past, what do you expect.

**The CHAIR** — And if you continue to interrupt, quite frankly, I will close you down.

**Mr WELLS** — No, you are not closing me down. You are not doing it.

**Mr MADDEN** — The urban consolidation growth and area planning will reduce pressure to develop beyond the urban growth boundary, and it will reduce pressure on the ad hoc development through our valued green wedges. This is our strong commitment to managing urban sprawl. Certainly we want to manage the green wedges from ad hoc rampant development. We know there are others who have no regard for green wedges. We are committed to the protection — —

**Mr WELLS** — Who is that?

**The CHAIR** — I have asked — —

**Mr WELLS** — He has just said those not committed to the green wedges. I ask him to clarify it.

**Mr MADDEN** — We are committed to the protection of productive farming land and areas of high biodiversity value.

**Mr WELLS** — Who has written this for you?

**Mr MADDEN** — The principal difference is that we are committed to managing Melbourne's growth; we have a plan, and that plan helps protect green wedges and helps contain urban sprawl.

I know that Ms Munt mentioned the issue of resourcing: \$700 000 over two years is dedicated to the finalisation and implementation of green wedge management plans. This is a critical aspect of Melbourne 2030 that will ensure the unique qualities of our valued green wedges can continue to be protected.

The government response to the Melbourne 2030 audit, *Planning for all of Melbourne*, reiterates our strong commitment to the urban growth boundary as an effective tool for managing development. It also seeks to ensure that open space is properly planned for our growth areas and that open space is used effectively. *Planning for all of Melbourne* says that we will direct the Growth Areas Authority, working with councils and state agencies, to develop open space plans for each growth area, including the opportunity for multiple uses of undeveloped land. We will use these open space plans for informed precinct structure plans to ensure the provision — —

**Mr WELLS** — Would it be easier for him to table the document?



**The CHAIR** — Look, just stop that nonsense.

**Mr MADDEN** — It will ensure the provision of different types of open space. It also says that we will work with councils and state agencies to establish biodiversity corridors in areas such as along rivers and creeks, thus improving biodiversity outcomes. It is a significant step in the ongoing work to manage growth while reserving areas for open space, but in particular protecting green wedges and the biodiversity values in those green wedges.

These things are important contributors to Melbourne's livability and the 2008 budget delivers the resources to ensure that they are protected and that Melbourne will continue to remain one of the world's most livable cities.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister. Can I just remind members to avoid the interjections and, Minister, avoid reacting to any interjections and avoid provocation as well.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you for that direction.

**Mr WELLS** — You are going to start implementing that as of when?

**The CHAIR** — I have been implementing it and you have not been following it.

**Mr WELLS** — So that is as of now.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Minister, you spoke about all the extra resources you are getting in planning this year. What I would like to know is when we are going to see some return on that investment, specifically with respect to the Narrawong DPO 7 issue. You said last December that it was a priority for you to address that issue. It is a matter of great concern to the residents and land-holders who are affected by that. The delay is causing enormous difficulties. When will you address that issue?

**Mr MADDEN** — I missed some of the details?

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — The Narrawong DPO 7 call-in is sitting with you and you said last December you would address it.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you very much, Mr Rich-Phillips.

**The CHAIR** — The minister needs to relate it to the estimates. Can you clarify that?

**Mr BARBER** — It is a matter of when he will resolve it.

**The CHAIR** — We are not dealing with the outcome.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — The minister has said he has received \$37.4 million extra this year. Before the Parliament votes to give it, we might like to know how he is going to use it, given he has this backlog of these issues.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you very much, Mr Rich-Phillips. I am happy to give you the detail on notice, but I will try to do justice to the principle in the basics of the answer in the circumstances in relation to DPO 7. If it is the one that I think you are talking about, that is the one in the Glenelg shire; is that right?

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Yes.

**Mr MADDEN** — This is a particularly significant issue because it has been a long-going issue and we have seen a number of significant issues like this occur in the Glenelg shire. It is worth bearing in mind that councils are the principal planning authority at a local level in relation to these issues. Before they can have their planning scheme implemented, they have to do sufficient strategic work to make sure that it operates properly. In this case with Glenelg, they have made on a number of occasions some decisions which do not reflect good policy practice and this is one of those precincts which has been allowed to be opened up and developed without appreciating or taking into account some of the strategic issues that need to be borne in mind in matters like this.

I will give you some detail in relation to this matter. Whilst I know that there is certainly an issue about the land-holders in this precinct — and we have freed up parts of some of that area by staging what we can — the

critical issue here is that some of the land-holders in this location have been allowed permits by the council and they risk, because of climate change and coastal erosion and, I understand, the potential for sulphur acid soil — —

**Mr BARBER** — Acid sulphate.

**Mr MADDEN** — That's it, thank you very much. Thank you for the technical clarification there, Mr Barber.

There is a great risk to some of these residents. They are eager, of course, to get their hands on the land and to develop that, but what would be worse for them is if they built houses or developed those sites and a few months later either they could not get insurance for those homes because of the vulnerability of those areas or they had their houses washed away by coastal or tidal inundation. I know there have been some very strong advocates in relation to this matter, but the poor planning practices of the Glenelg council have brought about a position where these land-holders are caught between a rock and a hard place.

We are eager to resolve this issue. We have asked the council to resolve these matters and do the strategic work and bring that back to us. I understand that the area is currently subject to coastal mapping for sea level rise and the risk associated with that, and I understand also that development is currently being withheld to await the outcomes of that research. Basically it is a low dune system and the area is exposed to the sea. So it might be quite picturesque and it might initially sound like a lovely place to build a home, but it may not be a lovely place to build a home if there is a high risk of acid sulphate soils, as mentioned by Mr Barber, or tidal inundation and having your house basically washed away.

We are very keen to get this resolved, but it is not an easy matter to resolve. When you bear in mind the risks of climate change and what many experts are saying about the potential for sea rise, extreme weather events or coastal inundation because of tidal surge, then we have to be very cautious about what we allow strategically to take place in some of these areas. And this is in many ways a critical and test case for other coastal areas. Hence that is why we have had for some time our coastal management plan and the strategy that we have, because we have seen many people want to settle in coastal areas. The risk is loving our coast to death, and as well as that the great risk to proponents is that what might look like a picturesque location might also put them at enormous risk and also enormous and greater and financial risk than the situation they might currently be in.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — When will that matter be resolved, Minister?

**Mr MADDEN** — We have asked the council to do the work — their homework that they had not done in the first place. We have asked them to put in place the homework that they need to put in place. As I mentioned before, the area is being mapped in relation to sea level rises and the potential risks and threats, and I look forward to getting that resolved at the earliest possible date. It is an issue of great priority, but can I say that the last thing we would want is to have people settle in these locations and find that basically their houses have gotten washed away. Some of those scenes we see from overseas from time to time. Also bearing in mind that we have a number of coastal areas and we do not want to see some of the bad practices of the past replicated. People purchase land because it looked like it was a great location because of the vistas, only to find that they were never able to develop it. That has been the practice in some other locations, and they are matters that are being resolved currently with some of the other coastal councils. But it is very critical we get this right. This will also be representative of issues that need to be managed well into the future.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Once you get the input from the council you are seeking how long will it take your department to resolve this issue? Obviously this cannot go on forever.

**Mr MADDEN** — Absolutely right.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Once you get the information you need how long is it going to take you to settle it.

**Mr MADDEN** — Critically the responsibility from council is to get the homework done. It is sufficient to say if the homework they have done is sufficient too, we think we could get it closed very rapidly. But we have got to make sure that the council does the work. It is work that they had not done in the first place because it is quite substantial work. They have not done it in the first place, and now they have got to go back and do it. That has put some of their ratepayers at a great disadvantage.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — When you say ‘very rapidly’ what do you mean — three months, six months?

**Mr MADDEN** — I would just be presupposing an answer. Let us wait and see what the work is they provide to us. Let us see what the mapping says, and we will make a decision in relation to that as quickly as possible. But can I also point out that no doubt the land-holders would have issues associated with what the council may or may not have done in relation to these matters. It is not a matter of us just making a single decision and saying yea or nay; there are a whole lot of flow-on effects in relation to what it means for some of these stakeholders. We have to be very sensitive to that. I am sensitive to that and look to resolving this at the earliest possible date.

**Mr PAKULA** — Minister, even in recent days you have repeated publicly that Melbourne 2030 projections in terms of population are now likely to be more Melbourne 2020 in that the extra million people on current projections will be here a decade earlier than the original projections. With that in mind and given the ‘Planning for Victoria’ line item in budget paper 3 at page 343, what is the government planning to do in regard to Melbourne’s growth areas with the extra million people by 2020 in mind?

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you very much, Mr Pakula. Certainly we have continued to hear how in a sense Melbourne’s livability, its attractiveness, the prosperity and the economic opportunity is attracting large numbers to Victoria but also to Melbourne in particular. We are at a distinct advantage by comparison to the other eastern seaboard capital cities. You have just got to see the prices in Perth as well. In terms of capital cities we are relatively affordable and very competitive in attracting people. That is good for the prosperity of the city. Growth is a good thing, and it also assists us in delivering a skilled workforce at a time of skills shortage. That attractiveness puts us at a great advantage, and the advantages that we already have are being built upon by people coming to Melbourne and Victoria.

But with the growth that is occurring so quickly there is a need to fast-track the planning of new communities, particularly in Melbourne’s growth areas. We have a plan to meet our growth challenges through our policy, 2030, and communities are at the forefront and the centre of Melbourne 2030, and indeed our actions respond to this growth. Budget paper 3 shows \$37 million is being invested for packages of initiatives to manage Victoria’s rising population through better planning for growing communities. Of this 36.6 million, 5.6 million will assist the Growth Areas Authority to focus on the delivery of precinct structure plans, whilst a further \$1.6 million has been allocated to the Department of Planning and Community Development to better streamline growth area planning and approvals. The Growth Areas Authority was established in 2006 to better coordinate development in the growth areas. Its role is to streamline planning processes and assist in the delivery of precinct structure plans in those growth areas. The Growth Areas Authority will continue to receive the annual allocation of \$4.7 million to continue this process of streamlining the development of growth areas.

As announced earlier this year by the Premier, through the precinct structure planning program the Growth Areas Authority is playing a significant role in reforming the planning process to speed up the release of land to the market for 90 000 new homes. This will maintain Melbourne’s competitive advantage, ensuring Melbourne remains the most affordable housing market on the eastern seaboard. The precinct structure plan program will oversee the implementation of the urban growth zone across the growth areas by cutting the time it takes to prepare land for development by more than 12 months. It will deliver housing more effectively in our growth areas by rezoning all remaining development of greenfield land inside the urban growth boundary in growth areas. It will streamline the existing planning process by stripping the system of unnecessary delays and removing overlaps in duplicating referral stages in the approval process and cutting thousands of dollars in development costs and significantly increasing the supply of new homes.

The streamlined precinct structure planning process in the urban growth zone will accelerate and lift the quality of planning in our newest communities, ensuring that we plan by choice and not by chance. The program will build on the work that has already been done over the 40 precinct structure plans, three of which have already been approved. Those three relate to Cranbourne North stage 1, Point Cook Homestead Road and \*Merrifield Central, and will provide around 5500 new homes and around 17 000 new jobs. Those precinct structure plans will identify areas for housing, employment and other opportunities, along with community facilities, public transport routes and open space so that the strategic planning is done right the first time.

The new precinct structure plans will replace overly complex planning processes, incorporating native vegetation requirements to streamline the process rather than their being dealt with separately as an appendix to the planning

process. The government will proactively ensure that livability planning is at the front and centre of our plan for growth areas by turning spaces into places. Again, as I have mentioned on many occasions, it is not about subdivisions — it is about livable suburbs, and helping drive the market and ensuring that we continue to see Melbourne as a great place to live, work and raise a family.

**Dr SYKES** — There is more to be done. Minister, my question relates to consideration of climate change in your assessment of project proposals, and I ask: what resources have you allocated for assessing the Sugarloaf pipeline project advisory committee report, which I understand you received last Friday? By way of background on the Sugarloaf pipeline, or the north–south pipeline, you would be aware it is a very controversial project with many people concerned about the basis of the whole project and also the government’s failure to follow due process. In relation to the report — —

**The CHAIR** — Can we try not to be provocative and get to the question?

**Dr SYKES** — I am just giving the minister background, because he may not have full background; he may not have notes on it. In relation to the report you are about to consider, are you aware that the committee did not have access to the CSIRO’s most recent report on climate projections for the Goulburn–Broken catchment? The worst-case scenario would suggest a 44 per cent reduction in run-off. There are also issues in relation to the information on the impact on the Goulburn River flow in that the measures on the Goulburn River flow in the report were done 25 kilometres downstream, with other streams coming into the river below the take-off point.

**The CHAIR** — Dr Sykes, what is the question?

**Dr SYKES** — My question is: given the situation that I have outlined briefly — because I have been truncated — I would expect that there would be an extensive commitment in the assessment of what many people consider to be a fundamentally flawed project, so what resources are you putting into it?

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you for that question, Dr Sykes. With your obvious degree of technical interest in relation to this project, I hope that you made a presentation to the panel in relation to those matters, because that is what the panel was for. I know you mentioned process, but we had — —

**Dr SYKES** — Unfortunately the panel had restricted terms of reference, and a number of the people making presentations were told that their information was not relevant.

**The CHAIR** — The minister, to answer.

**Mr MADDEN** — Given your level of commitment in relation to any of these matters, Dr Sykes, I would have encouraged you to have made — —

**The CHAIR** — Minister, on the question, please.

**Dr SYKES** — These points have been made to the panel, Minister. I did not need to do it personally, because the people out there are raising these concerns. This is not a political issue — —

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Dr Sykes. The minister, to answer the question, please.

**Dr SYKES** — It is a people issue.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thanks very much, Chair.

**Mr PAKULA** — It is clearly not a political issue.

**Mr MADDEN** — I get a sense that the opposition might have had a late night last night or something. They are all a bit grumpy today, Chair.

**Dr SYKES** — No, I did not. I will play the ball, Minister, if you will play the ball.

**Mr MADDEN** — I am happy to answer, Dr Sykes. I am happy to answer on, I suppose — and I am interpreting your question — the two matters — —

**Dr SYKES** — It is a simple question: what resources are you going to put into it?

**The CHAIR** — The question was: what resources are you putting into it.

**Mr MADDEN** — The two matters that Dr Sykes appears to have raised, Chair, is no doubt resourcing, but in terms of process, he mentioned process and I would like to speak to process as well as the way in which that due process will continue. On 21 December last year I decided that an environment effects statement was not required for the Sugarloaf pipeline project, Chair, as the potential adverse effects are not of such magnitude to warrant an environment effects statement. However, though, I did determine that some further investigations and public review of the proposal were needed.

I have therefore required an alternate and proportionate assessment process to address the environmental and related social and economic issues, including the downstream environmental effects of diverting water from the Goulburn River. This has involved the preparation of a project impact assessment (PIA) report on the potential effects of the project by the Sugarloaf alliance, as the proponent, public exhibition of the report and the appointment of the expert advisory committee to review the PIA report and the public submissions and provide advice on the final pipeline alignment. I just wanted to clarify those matters about process.

**The CHAIR** — Okay. Resources?

**Mr MADDEN** — The report, I understand, was placed on exhibition from 19 February to 18 March 2008 to enable the public to comment on the proposed pipeline alignment options. I am advised we received 104 submissions, and the four-person advisory committee commenced its public hearings on 2 April to clarify particular matters raised in the submissions. The advisory committee has reported to me and has provided me with the report, and I had an initial briefing from the panel as recently as this week.

I will consider, reflect on and ask for further advice in relation to the report provided to me by the advisory committee. I will make a decision on the final pipeline alignment and resolve the means of authorising this under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

The project also requires approval, I understand, under the commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, and the commonwealth has accredited — this is about process as well — the Victorian PIA advisory committee process as the required assessment process under the act. In view of its statutory time frame for decision-making, it is likely that the commonwealth will make its decision in late June. This will also be considered by the environmental effects assessment unit within the department. They will provide me with advice, and also the planning and policy team in the Department of Planning and Community Development. So it is quite an extensive process; it is not ad hoc. Due process has taken place, and I just wanted to clarify that for Dr Sykes.

What is particularly important in relation to the other component of his question is: what resources have we allocated? I am not the proponent. Let us make that clear: I am not the proponent of this project. I am the planning authority for this project. The proponent is the alliance, and of course that is done in conjunction with the Minister for Water. So I would expect that on making the decisions and any determinations in relation to that project, and any qualifications that I might seek in relation to that project or any other aspects that I request that relate to my decision, if there are resources either necessary or warranted in relation to any matters, then that is a proposition that I might make as part of my determination, but it is not for me as the planning authority to allocate funds to that. If there are any funds required in any manner in relation to any qualification, then that would be at the proponent's expense, and it would fall within the portfolio of the minister who is the proponent of the project.

Chair, it is not appropriate for me to nominate a figure that may or may not be allocated at this stage, because I am waiting for the resolution, and my resolution in relation to this is based on the advice that will come to me. If there is a need for any further resourcing, and should I make that determination based on any information that would come to me through the department or through this due process, then I would make that as a qualification, and that cost would sit with the respective proponent minister. I would expect that when that proponent minister comes to this table, then you should ask that question of that minister.

**The CHAIR** — Okay. That minister is coming.

**Dr SYKES** — Can I just get clarification?

**The CHAIR** — Very, very quickly; it has been quite long.

**Dr SYKES** — Minister, in view of this very important CSIRO report becoming available after the conclusion of that inquiry, would you accept and look at a copy of that report if I provided it to you?

**Mr MADDEN** — I am happy to receive that if you make that available to me, and I am happy to refer that back to the department so that they can address that in terms of the advice they provide to me. I expect, Dr Sykes, the department would also have considered that or would look to consider that in light of the sort of advice that I receive when those respective units within government provide advice to me.

**Dr SYKES** — And will the report that you are looking at be made public?

**Mr MADDEN** — What is normally the case is that in making my decisions I normally make reports public.

**Dr SYKES** — So the report will be made public?

**The CHAIR** — Thank you. I think we will move on.

**Mr MADDEN** — I would expect that to be the case.

**Mr SCOTT** — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3, page 343, and your earlier comments regarding funding in this year's budget for the implementation of planning initiatives in Melbourne and regional Victoria. I would like to know how you will be assisting regional Victoria with its strategic land use plan.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you very much, Mr Scott. I know that this week there has been a large focus on Melbourne, as in Melbourne 2030, but one of the reasons there has been such great discussion is we are seeing extraordinary growth not only in Melbourne but also in regional Victoria. We have seen regional Victoria's population grow by 51 000 people between 2001 and 2006, with growth concentrated primarily in regional centres and peri-urban areas, including coastal areas close to Melbourne and Geelong. Chair, this stands as a stark contrast to the years prior to that when we saw a decline in the population across regional — —

**Mr WELLS** — Who wrote this for you? Who writes this for you?

**The CHAIR** — The minister to continue, thank you.

**Mr WELLS** — Why don't you just table the document?

**Mr MADDEN** — Can I just say, Mr Wells — —

**Mr WELLS** — Just table the document. Make it easier for all of us; just table the document. It will save you reading it, so we can put it in. You cannot miss any commas, full stops or anything.

**Mr MADDEN** — Mr Wells, can I just say that it was not this government that described rural Victoria as the toenails of Victoria.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — You just said it was too far away.

**Mr WELLS** — You said it was too far away.

**Mr MADDEN** — We did not write that script, Mr Wells.

**Mr WELLS** — You are part of the government that said they are ugly, ugly people.

**Mr MADDEN** — I think your former leader wrote that script about the toenails of Victoria, Mr Wells.

**The CHAIR** — We will call it a draw, thank you.

**Mr WELLS** — Just table the document and save boring us to tears.

**The CHAIR** — That is just inappropriate. We will call it a draw. Minister, continue to answer the question, please.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thanks, Chair.

**Mr WELLS** — He is going to lose his place.

**Mr MADDEN** — I appreciate the sensitivity of the opposition, and if they were looking for excitement, I would suggest — —

**Mr WELLS** — You said they were ugly, ugly people.

**The CHAIR** — I asked you to desist. Can you both desist, please!

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you very much, Chair.

**Mr WELLS** — He has lost his spot.

**Mr MADDEN** — I will try to restrain myself from responding to the sensitivities of the opposition, Chair, but they seem to be quite sensitive today.

**The CHAIR** — Please continue.

**Mr MADDEN** — President, as I said, the population of regional Victoria grew by 51 000 people between 2001 and 2006.

**Mr WELLS** — Who is ‘President’?

**Mr MADDEN** — Sorry, Chair. Did I say ‘President’? He exerts that sort of authority — as opposed to some other members of this place.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister; that is not helping.

**Mr WELLS** — Obviously they have written ‘President’ in his briefing and not ‘Chair’.

**Ms MUNT** — You are embarrassing yourselves.

**The CHAIR** — Minister, get on with it.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you very much. We are committed to assisting councils to respond to these significant emerging issues across regional Victoria, particularly on the back of the success of the Living in Provincial Victoria campaign. We have seen enormous growth, and we are committed to build on these initiatives over the next four years. We are assisting councils to respond to those emerging issues, particularly around land use. We have contributed \$500 000 to the rural land use program, which is built on the successful implementation of the rural zones in partnership with rural councils and the Municipal Association of Victoria. These initiatives saw the implementation of 15 rural land use planning projects across the state, which will respond to various regional land use pressures through better strategic land use planning directives.

As I mentioned earlier, in this year’s budget we are investing \$119 million in planning reforms and urban renewal projects. Of this, \$37 million will be spent over four years on planning initiatives; a significant component of that, particularly in relation to strategic advice and information, will be invested in regional initiatives. Whilst those initiatives are still being developed up, it is important to recognise that the work has commenced to develop work around corridor strategies and they will ensure that particularly those fast-growing regions are networked to other cities and regions whilst protecting those rural and natural resources and landscapes, and there will be more focus on strategic planning in particular.

I know Mr Rich-Phillips highlighted an issue of his interest. Some of these issues arise when the strategic work has not been done, so we are committed to making sure that we complement local government’s work by investing in partnership with them to ensure that they do the strategic work that has to be done.

As well as that, basically our investment is quite significant. We are very committed to growing all of Victoria, including metropolitan Melbourne and inner Melbourne, and so we will continue to make provincial Victoria a top priority for this government, and I look forward to announcing further policy initiatives and actions that will continue to improve the planning process and the planning result to make sure that provincial Victoria remains and continues to grow as a great place to live, work and raise a family.

**Dr SYKES** — But what about rural Victoria, Minister?

**The CHAIR** — I think ‘provincial Victoria’ means both rural and regional Victoria.

**Dr SYKES** — Does it? Does ‘provincial’ mean ‘rural’ as well?

**Mr MADDEN** — Yes.

**Dr SYKES** — It does not just mean Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong?

**The CHAIR** — No, it means both.

**Mr MADDEN** — It means all of Victoria, growing all of Victoria.

**Mr BARBER** — Minister, if I can take you back to page 186 of budget paper 3. Chair, with your assistance, there are a large number of new measures here so I just want to get — —

**The CHAIR** — We can also look at the discontinued ones down the back.

**Mr BARBER** — Yes. I just want to get the measure clear so that I can frame my question properly. In relation to precinct structure plans being completed, can you tell us what proportion — —

**Mr MADDEN** — Sorry, can you just point out which line you are on there?

**Mr BARBER** — Third measure from the bottom of page 186. Can you tell us what proportion of principal and major activity centres have their precinct structure plans now?

**Mr MADDEN** — I do not have that specific information in front of me, but I am happy to provide you with that. What we have seen is a number of councils make significant inroads into these matters. Some councils have invested very widely in those and some have probably almost gone into too much detail in some aspects. So what we are trying to do, in conjunction with local government, is develop a consistent approach to the precinct structure plans, particularly in activity centres, and to assist councils.

The announcements that I made earlier in the week in conjunction with the Premier, in working in partnership with local governments — particularly in and around the announcements for the principal activity zone — is the ambition of a consistent approach whilst recognising the need for a tailored approach to these principal activity centres with regards to local expectations as well as an objective of getting greater levels of housing into them. We look forward to ensuring that we have got the level of detail, but not too much detail to not allow some flexibility. So we are happy to provide you with the detail about how many have been completed in the principal activity centres.

**Mr BARBER** — Is that what that note says?

**The CHAIR** — You mean the principal and the major ones, or both?

**Mr MADDEN** — When you say ‘precinct structure plans’, are you after — —

**Mr BARBER** — Principal and major activity centres. Is that what that note says?

**Mr MADDEN** — No, I do not think it does.

**Mr BARBER** — So what I want to know is — —

**The CHAIR** — You have already asked your question. You have got another one, have you?

**Mr BARBER** — No. So this is not saying they are 100 per cent complete — that is my point. This measure is not saying that they are 100 per cent complete; this is saying that however many are completed — which might be one — they will be in accordance with adopted process?

**Mr MADDEN** — That is why I wanted to clarify the precinct structure plan. These precinct structure plans relate to a number of areas, whether they are the major activity centres, the principal activity centres or the



growth areas. I think the line that you are looking at, Mr Barber, relates to the growth areas, as opposed to activity centres. But I am happy to provide you with the detail of those that have been completed, whether you want the principal activity centres or the growth areas; I am happy to provide you with both lots of information.

**The CHAIR** — I think he also wants the major ones.

**Mr BARBER** — So let me ask this question then — —

**The CHAIR** — You have already asked a question.

**Mr BARBER** — No, that was trying to understand what the measure is.

**The CHAIR** — You only get the chance to ask one question — —

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — He was clarifying.

**Mr BARBER** — Unless you are Bill Sykes or you kick up a stink, I guess.

**The CHAIR** — Well, you can kick up a stink if you like, but — —

**Mr BARBER** — I do not play that game, but I just want to ask a question which — —

**The CHAIR** — You are asking a range of successive questions, and the rules are clearly that you ask a question and we move onto the next person.

**Mr BARBER** — At the rate we are going I will not get another question, so I would just like to ask my question.

**The CHAIR** — We are about to take a 5-minute break so if you want to ask for a clarification on the previous question, you can.

**Mr BARBER** — These new panels that you are setting up to make decisions in activity centres — will they only be set up for those activity centres that have completed structure plans?

**Mr MADDEN** — I will give you a fairly extensive answer if I can, Mr Barber.

**The CHAIR** — Not for too long.

**Mr MADDEN** — The announcements we made this week were on the setting up of a number of initiatives. One of those initiatives was to establish a principal activity zone, because when you look at some of these principal activity centres, even though some of the communities have done their precinct structure plans, in some of these areas there is a virtual plethora of different zones. So it does present some difficulty in giving some clarity and some streamlining to the way in which people can either acquire land or develop land, because you might have different-zoned pieces of land sitting next to each other in a principal activity centre. That zoning may not necessarily complement the sort of use that even the precinct structure plan reflects.

What we want to see is the integration of the precinct structure plan. We have also mentioned this week the precinct structure plan will inform the infrastructure investment plan. That is complemented by the principal activity zone, and then the overarching basically decision-making process then on applications made by proponents in those principal activity zones is basically through the development assessment committees. The mechanism there is to give clarity in terms of the zoning. That is informed by the precinct structure plans and the master plan. We know what sort of infrastructure we are after so we can complement the developments that might occur. In terms of the decision-making process, in putting the clarity into that, then the objective decision-making process and the development assessment committee by the five members on that committee will assist in progressing these.

The councils will still be the ones determining what happens in their local area in terms of the policy, in terms of the zoning and in terms of the structure planning. They will also be able to reflect and will work very closely with council, in partnership with them, to reflect the ambitions of those in the community, but bearing in mind the need for greater levels of housing in these activity centres given the high level of growth. What we want to do then is have the development assessment committees established with five members. The five-member development assessment committees will have two representatives nominated by the specific local government in which the

development or the proposition is occurring. There will be two representatives from state government. Those two representatives will be basically planning experts or officers. Local government's representatives can be councillors or officers. They can be any combination of the above, or nominees. Then there will be one more person who will be an independent chair, and that person will be agreed with in conjunction with the MAV or nominated through that mechanism.

We believe this will still reflect the views and allow the community's views to be reflected, but basically the policy development of the precinct structure planning still rests predominantly with the council. We will work very closely with them to ensure that they are completed and that there is clarity around that. But what is particularly important is that the rigour in that will help inform the decision-making process, rather than what has sometimes happened, which is where there are gaps, then the decision making is not clear. There will still be mechanisms for appeal — that will not change — and the local council will be able to determine the sorts of triggers or the mechanisms or controls within those principal activity centres through the principal activity zone.

**Mr BARBER** — The DACs will proceed while the planning work is still being done in some cases?

**Mr MADDEN** — What we did nominate today is our intention is to roll out the principal activity zone and the development assessment committees across the 26 councils, but in the initial stages we are focused on five at this particular point in time, because they are ready — we believe — to progress into this space, and we will see how the other councils go in terms of the strategic work before we progress on the other fronts with the other 21.

**The CHAIR** — I remind members of the committee and the minister that this is not question time. I have made light of throwing out committee members or throwing out ministers, but we do not work that way; it is actually question and answer. If people can be very precise in their questions and definite in their answers without any provocation, that would be very helpful to Hansard staff, I am sure.

**Mr MADDEN** — I am not sure Mr Wells heard your comments then.

**The CHAIR** — I spoke to him outside.

**Mr NOONAN** — Minister, I want to ask you about housing affordability, which everyone seems to be speaking about at the moment. I think you have referred in your earlier answers to how planning reform will play or is playing an important role in this area. In terms of this budget what initiatives have been planned to ensure housing affordability across Victoria?

**Mr MADDEN** — Thanks very much, Mr Noonan. No doubt planning plays a critical role in maintaining land supply and housing diversity while ensuring that the overall planning system does not obstruct or delay development. It is a very broad debate — affordability. It is not just specifically about planning; there are many other factors that contribute to affordability. Some of those are certainly beyond just the built form or the land use or the land availability.

Recent reports by the development industry bodies acknowledge Melbourne's relative affordability, with vacant lot prices in Melbourne being significantly lower than in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth. These reports relate to Victoria's better performance to its planning for adequate land supply and lower cost of infrastructure provisions. Certainly that is a great compliment to what we all achieve at a local government and state government level about ensuring that there is adequate provision of land supply, and no doubt that certainly allows some degree of affordability here in Victoria.

We have a reputation, certainly, as well as that as being one of the world's most livable cities and being one of the most affordable capital cities. That is a great complement of attributes. To continue to achieve this we have ensured adequate land supply and earlier this year released the 2007 urban development program report. It is a major initiative that has seen us release in the order of 90 000 residential allotments, or the announcement that they will be released, within Melbourne's growth corridors. It is one thing to have a good system, it is one thing to have the land, but also what is critical is that because we do monitor the availability of land and we do have our growth areas, that strategic work and that effort certainly complements livability and affordability.

The reforms announced earlier this year will enable us to work with local government to put up more land and to allow for it to be released more quickly to the market. This will reduce the costs of housing development, particularly because the holding cost to developers is often passed onto the purchaser, so if we can reduce that

holding cost then that can be of great benefit. That is also one of the critical components: if we can streamline the planning process and reduce delays, then we are reducing the holding cost, and that is a critical component in terms of costs in the provision of housing. If we can streamline the process, reduce the holding costs, that is going to be passed onto the consumer at the end of the day. So I am very committed to ensuring that we can reduce the holding cost for those who are seeking to release land and housing to the market.

What is also important is that whilst we get the land or the housing to market we have got to have carefully planned communities, well considered, so that families who move into these areas do not have to spend a lot of time or money or effort getting to where they need to be, either schools or jobs. So the precinct structure plans that we have already talked about today are critical. In the 2008 budget we allocated \$119 million for investment in planning reforms and urban renewal projects. That will also assist in the acceleration of those 90 000 blocks of land. It also includes investments of \$34 million in our transit cities projects and allocates \$37 million for Melbourne 2030, and improves strategic planning for the regions. These initiatives contribute directly or indirectly to not only livability but affordability and improving access to services in those areas where we release land.

Of the \$119 million the budget also delivers \$15.1 million over four years for the Department of Planning and Community Development to provide more land for housing to reduce costs for purchasers, by working with three tiers of government to release land faster and at less cost. So collaboration and a team effort is critical to making sure that we are getting more housing product to market.

We want to see councils provided with information and policy advice about housing trends and data on housing affordability, because predominantly local government is the planning authority for the vast majority of housing, and if we can assist them then that can also reduce the holding time and the costs that might be passed on.

It is important when we are talking about housing that we have got to bear in mind housing diversity. It is one thing to release a standard housing product, but if there is a diversity of housing types, that certainly contributes to housing affordability. All of us, no doubt, live in an area that we enjoy or we have got connections within and that is very important, but when people are either trying to settle members of their own family, whether they be older members or younger members of their family, or whether they are trying to downsize in their own community, cashing in what might be a house to something more reduced, then it is important with the diversity in any particular area that it allows that affordability.

What we have seen is we have got very good house prices on the urban fringe, but part of the announcements that we have made this week — and I would expect Mr Barber would also be interested in this because of his questions in relation to precinct structure plans — is that if we are going to make big inroads into housing affordability, it is about providing diversity and also that diversity right across Melbourne, not just the standard housing product out in the urban fringe. So the investment will complement what we are doing, complement housing affordability and livability, and we think that will certainly contribute to keeping the lid on housing prices and, as well as that, be critical to all those investments and all those announcements, whether they be policy announcements or commitments in terms of funding. We have got to make sure that people are not, in a sense, using a litre of petrol to buy a litre of milk, that they have to have services close to them and that they are not marooned in whatever community they are and that they are able to access those services and be linked into the communities that they know and love.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — Minister, I refer to budget paper ‘Service delivery’, page 290, in relation to ‘Revitalising central Dandenong’. I understand there is seed funding over the — —

**Mr MADDEN** — Can I just interrupt there, please, Mr Dalla-Riva. Which budget paper are you on?

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — ‘Service delivery’ budget paper.

**Mr MADDEN** — Which budget paper number — just remind me?

**The CHAIR** — No 3.

**Mr MADDEN** — No 3. What page are you on?

**The CHAIR** — It is on page 290, and it is —

**Mr MADDEN** — Just highlight the line.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — ‘Revitalising central Dandenong’. Over the forward estimates there is \$1.4 million, and I am just seeking some further detail in relation to what the funds are for. My understanding is outlined on page 295, and I am just curious: does not the DPCD already have a service centre in Melbourne’s south-east, and with respect to the comments on page 295 regarding that funding what services will the department provide that cannot be obtained by other means?

**Mr MADDEN** — Just the last line again that you mentioned?

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — What services, as outlined in the budget paper, will the department provide that cannot be obtained by other means?

**Mr MADDEN** — I think your specific reference is — I refer you to page 295 of budget paper 3 as well, the bottom of — —

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — That is what I just said.

**Mr MADDEN** — Yes, that is right, but if I refer you to the bottom of it which explains basically the fit-out of the new 5-star green-star A-grade office building of around 13 000 square metres in central Dandenong to be developed by the private sector to co-locate government services in Melbourne’s southeast area. The building is a seed project for the Revitalising central Dandenong transit city project.

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** — My two questions were — —

**Mr MADDEN** — So if you turn the page to 296, you will see that the initiative contributes to a range of Department of Human Services’ outputs, Department of Justice’s Promoting and protecting consumer interests and court matters and dispute resolution outputs, and the Department of Planning and Community Development’s Planning, urban design and housing affordability output. Basically what we are doing in that project is bringing together a number of government offices in a new building — in many ways a landmark building because it will be 5-star, green-star — from a number of locations or pre-existing buildings in and around the Dandenong precinct and co-locating them so that we get economies of scale, a better building for all of those workers because some of the buildings they are currently working in, in different locations, even the ones within Dandenong are a bit tired, the services are tired, and they are probably not necessarily consumer friendly.

If you are walking up to get the service that you want, they may not be compatible with people’s expectations of good customer service. This provides us with the opportunity to build an environmental building, a benchmark building which is a catalyst for urban renewal in Dandenong. In that sense it is a landmark building which complements the expectations of workers and the expectations of clients or consumers as to what might be the case.

You would also understand, Mr Dalla-Riva, that there is a need for a large degree of varying service provision in that region, so the type of urban renewal project that is being undertaken will do a number of things. It will improve the service delivery, but just the investment and the urban renewal will create job opportunities. It is complemented by the impending opening of EastLink, and along EastLink there are a number of major centres like Ringwood, like Dandenong, like Frankston — and I think there was an article in the *Age* by an expert recently saying that the commuting times to those centres will be reduced significantly — so that extends the catchment to those centres, and whether it is through public transport or through road, particularly EastLink, people will be able to commute to those centres in a more timely manner.

It opens up the catchment within, say, a 30-minute time space. All of those components, all of those attractors will really assist the urban renewal we are seeing in Dandenong, in particular the new service building, part of the urban renewal, located near EastLink, a broad catchment — that has got to be good for everybody in the surrounding area.

**The CHAIR** — You pinched my question; I was going to ask about Dandenong, too.

**Mr WELLS** — Do you want to move straight onto me?

**The CHAIR** — No, I am quite happy to ask about these regional centres like Dandenong, but also Geelong which is another one, and what the budget is providing for those regional centres. You mentioned Dandenong, but in the context of talking about Geelong could you also say what this means in terms of attracting private investment, including private investment in places like Dandenong?

**Mr MADDEN** — As members here may have noticed today, the strategic investment in a number of these centres and the urban renewal transit city-type projects and also the discussion that is taking place around principal activity centres and the streamlining of the planning process is really about directing the market in many ways to invest in those centres. Whether it be jobs and employment, whether it be retail, whether it be services or whether it be housing, our leadership in this area and our support, particularly our symbolic investment as mentioned in Mr Dalla-Riva's question in relation to serviceability by government, if we are delivering into those centres by investing and actually setting up in those centres as well, that is a great sign that can give the market a lot of confidence that its investment is warranted and build as well as that a critical mass from which other investments can come together.

Of course Geelong is one of those. The TAC offices are located down there; Geelong is a transit city, there is the investment down there, there is the huge demand for housing in the region. The attractiveness of Geelong for many reasons: the regional fast rail, the bay, it is close to the Surf Coast, all that makes it a very attractive proposition for those who want lifestyle as well as living in an urban environment.

Some of the figures that we have seen in terms of population growth, I mentioned earlier that the census indicated that regional Victoria grew by 50 000 people, but of that Greater Geelong grew by more than 11 000 people. Approximately 23 per cent of the growth in regional Victoria is going to Greater Geelong, so you can understand the importance of the planning in that location. If you complement that with, as I mentioned, Dandenong and EastLink, and you think about the bypass and what that will do to take some of the traffic off the streets through the heart of Geelong, you can see it will be an even more attractive proposition to live in the heart of Geelong as well as the surrounding areas, hence the need to make significant strategic investment in the likes of Geelong, given its current growth and the potential and anticipated growth.

Adding to the 5.8 million allocated to Geelong in last year's budget for the revitalisation of the Geelong transit city project, this year the government has allocated an additional \$24.5 million to ensure that we invest in that livability. These funds will provide improvements to the railway station precinct in Geelong and the new pedestrian links between the station and the new TAC building. Further to the 08–09 budget 7.9 million has been committed to be spent over four years for the strategic planning of the city through the development of the Geelong future city master plan.

Seeing there is growth, we have to do the strategic work as well in partnership with the City of Greater Geelong, so we are very keen to make sure that happens. This will assist in the development of a number of business cases for the redevelopment of the Geelong library heritage centre, the redevelopment of the Geelong Performing Arts Centre and the redevelopment of the heritage-listed Geelong courthouse into a youth and arts centre.

We are committed to ensuring that the livability of Geelong and the surrounding regions is sustained, to build on the economic prosperity of the 240 000 people who currently live in the area. Recognised as Australia's largest provincial municipality, Geelong is strategically networked in a service and transit-oriented location. It offers a great opportunity, a unique opportunity of varying a range of services to the local community and the wider region for people who want to live there. I would expect that even the extent of take-up of people living in the surrounding region will be great given the Geelong bypass, particularly in locations like the Golden Plains and Surf Coast shires and even the Corangamite shire. Geelong is no doubt one of the most significant hubs. Its city centre is quite vibrant, but this will add even more to that.

Further to the decisions we have made this week about principal activity zones and nominating Geelong as one of those for priority, we see enormous opportunities, particularly around housing and the diversity of housing that I have spoken about already, and the complementing potential growth in the Armstrong Creek area. The Armstrong Creek area is towards the Surf Coast. That is where the sort of suburban settlement will extend, but we have to provide diversity of housing choice by complementing that with not only leading and accentuating investment in central Geelong but for housing provision in central Geelong. We think the strategic investment, the strategic work and the other complementary initiatives that are taking place will see Geelong going from strength to strength and being made an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

**Mr WELLS** — Minister, I just want to bring you back to the Ringwood transit city project. I am just wondering whether during the break you were able to get that figure we asked for on how much has been actually spent on this project?

**Mr MADDEN** — No, I had not anticipated getting that for you; I had anticipated giving it to you after taking it on notice.

**Mr WELLS** — Was that money spent in this current financial year?

**Mr MADDEN** — We have allocated funds previously to Ringwood for the development work in terms of much of the planning for the work that needs to be undertaken. What we have seen, too, in regard to the Ringwood centre is a fantastic opportunity. I understand there will be commercial investors in that location, particularly in the shopping centre precinct; and redevelopment will continue or is anticipated to occur of much of the shopping precinct by those private investors, so we anticipate that before too long we will be able to complement that with an additional investment, particularly around the transport node.

As I mentioned before, Mr Wells, there is still some work to be done around finetuning the interface between the shopping precinct and the transit hub, where the buses and the trains come together and the way that complements the shopping centre. A lot of work has been done and we have invested money in that, but there are still matters to be resolved with the commercial developer of the shopping centre.

I understand some work has been done with the priority development panel to look at refining that. I would expect and anticipate that when these matters are resolved, the government would be looking to make a significant investment in the delivery of the transport hub in particular to complement the work that will take place in the Ringwood principal activity centre.

**Mr WELLS** — Is it true then that because of the delay in funding from the government — and I understand there is \$50 million pending — QIC, who are the major developer there, has actually scaled back its proposal from \$600 million to \$400 million — four towers to two towers? Is that your understanding of it?

**Mr MADDEN** — No, I do not believe that is the case at all, Mr Wells. I have had informal conversations with QIC in relation to these matters at some functions where they have been in attendance, and I have been very enthusiastic about reinforcing our commitment to the Ringwood transit city. They have also reflected their genuine enthusiasm for the project. As I said before, Mr Wells, we look forward to resolving the matters around the transport hub in particular, and look forward on the back of that to making some significant strategic investment in the no-too-distant future.

**Mr WELLS** — So are you negotiating with QIC, or are you negotiating with the mayor of Maroondah, Tony Dib, on this? What is the role of Tony Dib in this?

**Mr MADDEN** — Let me put it this way, Mr Wells. I do not negotiate with anybody in relation to these sorts of developments. Basically, as I mentioned before, a number of initiatives are taking place, including the strategic investment with the Maroondah council, to make sure that we support it on the strategic work that is taking place. I would anticipate a strategic investment before too long by this government in and around the transport hub.

There are some complementary designs in relation to the transport hub and the commercial centre and the interface, particularly across the highway there, and how that works and how we make that work. Some of those smaller matters, I understand, are being resolved with the priority development panel, which is really a panel of experts who can make qualification as to how these things should be resolved, such as the interface and the operational aspects of it. I would expect that when these matters are resolved, we would be able to make a complementary commitment to what we would all like to see, which is a significant investment to get a move on in terms of development around the station precinct.

**Mr PAKULA** — This is still on transit cities, Minister. I am interested in Broadmeadows, which lies just outside my electorate — in fact it is in Mr Barber's, but near enough to mine. Budget paper 3, at page 343, commits \$8.4 million over the next three years to revitalisation and regeneration for the Broadmeadows transit city. Could you give the committee some update on what that allocation will mean for the project?

**Mr MADDEN** — Anybody who has been to Broadmeadows recently would acknowledge in a sense the changes that are occurring in Broadmeadows. For some time Broadmeadows was seen as not necessarily an attractive place to be located, but given people's desire to live close to public transport, to have access to public transport, and the proximity of Broadmeadows to not only the likes of the city, the public transport network and the

regional transport network, but also the fact that it is close to the Metropolitan Ring Road, it gives great access to much of the services and industry located around the Metropolitan Ring Road. That is complemented by the Craigieburn bypass and there is a renewed enthusiasm by everybody in Broadmeadows to make greater inroads into the economic prosperity.

There is a great opportunity to really build on the investment we have already made. If anybody has visited the Global Learning Centre out there in Broadmeadows, they know that it is just a marvellous facility. It is a great testament to a partnership approach and what can be done to a community with a strategic investment — and it has been quite a large investment. That was done in conjunction with lots of people, and I think the people of Broadmeadows are particularly proud of that.

If we get the transit city arrangements happening around there sooner rather than later, what we will also see is better interface between the station precinct, the transport hub, and the road network. It is not dissimilar in many ways to some of the challenges that are faced by Ringwood in relation to resolving those matters. Where you have a triple-lane dual highway, you have to be able to get across that and also give traffic management issues priority but also pedestrians priority through that.

Our investment is a quite significant one. As part of the budget we have allocated \$8.36 million to the further development of the transit city over the next three years. In partnership with the council, we have contributed over \$800 000 to the Broadmeadows civic plaza. I was out there only last Friday, Mr Pakula, and the mayor was saying what a great space it is. Not only does it reflect well on the Global Learning Centre as a lovely forecourt, but it also provides for events like community events and a location for young people. Rather than hanging out, it is a place for them to do things and also use the cafes. They were complimenting that as well.

**Mr BARBER** — Did you take public transport out there?

**Mr MADDEN** — I take up Mr Barber's interjection — —

**The CHAIR** — Concentrate on the answer, please, Minister.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you, Chair. I do live on the Broadmeadows line, the Craigieburn line, Mr Barber, and I do use the line frequently. It is certainly a great opportunity to improve the public realm around there.

**Mr BARBER** — Try the bus connections from Broadmeadows station, mate.

**Mr MADDEN** — That is a good point, because this will help that interface between the bus system and the rail system, particularly at the station precinct. There is already a lot of built form around there, built some years. This gives an opportunity to renew that and the interface between that and the civic plaza, to bring that together with the shopping centre in a more integrated way.

We are also conscious about the other side of that railway line, Mr Barber. If we can get this right it can also open up economic opportunity for the other side of the railway line. There are some brownfield sites where industry has been located. If we bring this together, it will potentially provide an incentive for people to do housing developments on some of those brownfield sites and also add value and worth to some of the housing in that location.

So the investment is strategic, not only to improve the activities centre but also to improve the surrounding community and lift the level of prosperity and economic opportunity in the region. Again, like our other strategic investments, it will bring jobs into the region and it will bring other businesses and a range of business activity. That will provide for people being able to purchase, no doubt, housing with a degree of affordability in the surrounding region close to that activities centre. If people can live closer to where they work, that has to be a good thing because it just saves on the time spent and the energy spent — the wasted hours spent — commuting that people obviously get anxious about, with congestion.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Minister, I would like to ask you about progress or otherwise on the Rossdell Court development at Portland. This was the land that was rezoned residential by the Victorian government in order to maximise the sale price. It was then sold by your government to a private party, with their expectation to develop it. When the subdivision plan was put in, it was subsequently called in by your government and is now

stalled. My question is: what compensation have you set aside for that land-holder, given that land was clearly sold on the basis that it would be developed for residential — that is why it was rezoned by the government, to maximise the proceeds to the government. Now you have blocked that, what compensation will you pay or make available to the land-holder and when will you finally determine this call-in?

**The CHAIR** — Minister, as far as it relates to the estimates.

**Mr MADDEN** — There are a couple of things there, Mr Rich-Phillips. In relation to Rossdell Court, if you check the records and the detail of the administration in relation to the sale of that, I think you will find that the sale of that land was initiated by the Kennett government as part of the — —

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Rezoning was done by Kennett; the sale was done by you.

**Mr MADDEN** — I think you will find that the sale was initiated by the Kennett government as part of the port privatisation process, so I would ask you to check your details on that, to ensure that you have that right.

In relation to that, again I think you will find that the zoning in this matter had insufficient strategic work done and that was again a reflection of the ability of the Glenelg shire to actually do the strategic work it should have done. There is a recurring theme here, Mr Rich-Phillips. I know that Dr Naphine has been quite vocal on this, but I would suggest that if Dr Naphine had been just as vocal with the council at the time of the lack of investment in the strategic work, whether it be in relation to coastal inundation or buffer zones around industrial areas, then he would no doubt have ensured that this had not taken place. Particularly at a time when he was a minister in the Kennett government, I would have suspected that he would have been quite conscious also that the privatisation of the port and the port of Geelong and the sale or disposal of surplus land around that port at the time by the Kennett government — —

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Portland.

**Mr MADDEN** — Portland, sorry. Certainly it should have been borne in mind by the local member in that part of the world. No doubt this is a matter that needs to be resolved. It will be resolved. The critical issue here again, Mr Rich-Phillips, is that the zoning in relation to this, to my understanding, is not appropriate. It is not appropriate because basically in any industrial land you need to have a buffer. If you are going to build housing right up to some of this industrial land, it is an inappropriate use. In particular there are issues about the air quality around the port, I understand, and the impact on residential amenity, as well as the high level of truck usage that moves in and out of the port and the impact that will have on any proposed housing in relation to those who live in that housing. No doubt this is a matter which is a difficult one for the Glenelg Shire Council. They were very keen to have it zoned residential. It is an inappropriate use, and we will seek to make sure that the appropriate use is determined. No doubt, when that is resolved, the manner in which it is resolved will determine what takes place from there.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Minister, this is not an issue for Glenelg shire; this is an issue for the government. It was the government that was the beneficiary of the sale of that land when it was zoned residential. If you say it was inappropriate to be zoned residential, it should have been rezoned before the government sold and benefited from the sale of it as residential land. I mean, to sell it as residential land and then pull the zoning on the subsequent purchaser is unconscionable.

**Mr MADDEN** — I think if you check your notes in relation to this, Mr Rich-Phillips, you will find that normally when land is disposed of by a government the rezoning occurs before it is disposed of.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — And it was rezoned to residential.

**Mr MADDEN** — As I said, I think you will find if you check your records, Mr Rich-Phillips — —

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — It was sold by your government.

**Mr MADDEN** — The initial disposal of that land and the rezoning, I believe, has taken place under the Kennett government.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — The sale took place under your government to screw over the purchaser of that land.



**The CHAIR** — All right, I think we are just repeating each other in terms of — —

**Mr MADDEN** — I believe you should your records, Mr Rich-Phillips — —

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — It does not involve Glenelg shire, it involves you, Minister.

**Mr MADDEN** — No, I am suggesting to you that you should check your records, Mr Rich-Phillips, because I think this is part of what the Kennett government set in place.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — It was unconscionable conduct by your government.

**The CHAIR** — All right, I think you have both repeated yourselves a couple of times.

**Mr SCOTT** — I would like to return to the theme of transit cities, which you refer to in budget paper 3, pages 186 and 187. Could you outline the work that will be undertaken over the estimates period in the Footscray transit city?

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you very much, Mr Scott. Certainly the Footscray transit city is one of those hallmark projects that in years to come people will look back on and say, 'Wasn't that a fantastic initiative to serve the renewal that has taken place in Footscray?'. This is a very exciting proposition, the renewal of Footscray, because Footscray is located really in a bit of a logistics hub. It is located close to the ports, it is located nicely in relation to ports, airports, the Geelong highway — —

**Mr NOONAN** — It has a football team!

**Mr MADDEN** — Yes, it has got a football team. It has all those things. If you bear in mind, too, that Victoria University sits on the doorstep of the Footscray principal activity centre and as well that you have got three regional fast rail that move through there, then it really adds a high degree of attractiveness as a business proposition and investment proposition. The renewal of Footscray will be complemented by our investment. Since my update last year on our \$52.1 million Footscray renewal initiative I am pleased to report there has been substantial movement at the station. Basically it is one of a number of transit cities, but I am pleased to report that over the past six months a number of changes have been initiated to streamline the planning process, increase the planning certainty and enable the assembly of the key development sites to facilitate a new commercial development and housing investment as well.

We established a one-stop planning shop. The shop is assisting with the marketing and development of central Footscray as well as acting as a good source of information for developers or land-holders or businesses in the local community. That assists with expert planning and design advice to everybody in that region so they can also understand what will take place and what they need to bear in mind.

I became the responsible authority for the central Footscray precinct, and as a result a revised station precinct planning framework has been undertaken in collaboration with council, and updated planning controls for the wider Footscray transit city are in place. I also recently approved a planning permit for the first new major residential development in central Footscray. The planning permit will allow for a seven-storey development, which will breathe life into the disused site of 51 Hopkins Street, featuring 81 apartments and ground-level shops. The new development of Hopkins Street complements the objectives of the Footscray renewal initiative, and it will unlock — as I have mentioned, like with Dandenong — the economic and social potential of Footscray as well. It will create choice in housing, particularly in areas that are ripe for development, such as Footscray; it is a priority. It will also provide more attractive diverse living options close to shops and public transport right in the heart of Footscray.

We have been working very closely with the Maribyrnong City Council to attract investment in the area. I would also like to compliment the Maribyrnong City Council on its enthusiasm for the project and its enthusiasm for the partnership approach. One of the major initiatives is the Footscray station footbridge.

**The CHAIR** — I know the former member was very passionate about it.

**Mr MADDEN** — Yes, I know there are a number of members who are very passionate. They are very enthusiastic, as the locals are, to see the work start on the station footbridge. That will also allow for public rail improvements in and around the station. I know that anybody who has been out there would appreciate the

importance of the Olympic doughnut van. That is also a critical consideration in the mix out there. It is sort of an icon for the locals, and no doubt there is a high degree of sensitivity that that be integrated into whatever takes place in the future.

This is about more shops, more businesses, more jobs, improving the facilities, again, close to the public transport. It will make sure that it works.

**Mr BARBER** — There is no bus that takes you to the uni.

**Mr MADDEN** — I would have thought, Mr Barber, if you walk down the street, you could get there. It is good exercise.

**Mr BARBER** — There is no direct link from the railway station to the uni.

**Mr MADDEN** — It will provide for a great mix. I know how enthusiastic you are at catching buses, Mr Barber, but it is not that far really. Can I just say that this is well supported by the locals, well supported by local businesses, and well supported by Victoria University. One of the major sensitivities too is that we do not lose the great cultural feel and sense in the Footscray area. We want to make sure that that is a critical component in the consideration of the way in which the urban renewal takes place in Footscray. This is a great investment in what I suppose might be described as a traditional working-class heartland, and we look forward to seeing in years to come the great results that will have been achieved through this investment.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister. A final question from Dr Sykes.

**Dr SYKES** — Minister, my question relates to state government assistance to councils to adjust to the new planning zones. We discussed this today, and we discussed it last year, because there were many planning issues, including in the electorate of Benalla. These issues continue, and they seem to be caused to a large extent by farming land being directly transferred from the old zoning over to the new, with the associated tough restrictions on non-farming use, rather than being rezoned into rural living or rural activity, which gives broader use options. When can we expect your assistance measures to have an impact on the resolution of these planning issues in councils that I am very aware of, such as Benalla, Murrindindi, Strathbogie and Alpine, which in summary need a significant review of their overall planning zones, which would require \$100 000 to do it.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thanks for that, Dr Sykes. I am very conscious of this issue. There are a number of matters I would like to address in relation to your question. Certainly the adjustment from rural zones to farm zones was implemented by a number of councils with a varying degree of success. Some of those councils were very proactive, and some initiated it very quickly and were enthusiastic to address the issues with their local community. Some were reluctant, and highly reluctant, either for political reasons or community reasons, and some of those might have also been resource reasons — and not necessarily money in terms of resources. But I am very conscious, Dr Sykes, that we do have difficulty in the face of all the growth we have seen across the state with planning professionals. There is basically a shortage of planning professionals out there, and that makes it difficult for some rural councils and rural communities, like many skilled professions, to attract those personnel to settle and establish their lives and lifestyle in those rural areas. So I understand that for some of the councils that may have been reluctant or found a degree of difficulty it may have been directly associated with their lack of experienced personnel, basically.

**Dr SYKES** — There is certainly an issue. I agree with you there is an issue about lack of personnel, but it is also an issue about lack of money.

**Mr MADDEN** — Yes, certainly.

**The CHAIR** — I think we might finish up there, Minister.

**Mr MADDEN** — I will just try to quickly finalise that answer. There is no doubt that you can fix a lot of problems with more money. I am appreciative of that. I look forward to making some announcements in relation to these matters. I know that the Future Farming announcement we made had a significant amount of money attached to it to work with local councils on those fronts to assist them to do some of that strategic work where they need to clarify some of those zones. So the direct translation had an impact on some, but where we need to make some

adjustments to that and make added investment, the Future Farming money we think can help clarify that, and I look forward to seeing more money invested in those areas in the future.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister. That concludes consideration of the budget estimates for the portfolio of planning. I thank the minister and departmental officers for their attendance today. The committee has a couple of issues to follow up with you, and there may be some other questions forwarded to you in writing at a later date. The committee requests a written response to those matters be provided within 30 days.

**Mr MADDEN** — Thank you, Chair, and can I thank the members for their enthusiasm. Can I also thank you for the opportunity to speak to you, and I look forward to coming back again next year.

**Witnesses withdrew.**