Mr. Nathan Bunt,
Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee,
Parliament of Victoria,
Parliament House, Spring St.,
East Melbourne. Vic 3002. Email: osisd@parliament.vic.gov.au

9 December, 2011

OUTER SUBURBAN/INTERFACE SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry on Growing the Suburbs:
Infrastructure & Business Development in Outer Suburban Melbourne.

The Committee has been asked to report to Parliament on growing the suburbs and in particular to:

a) identify existing public and private infrastructure provision, including schools, hospitals, commercial and shopping precincts, transport and roads, telecommunications, water and power;
b) assess the capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate increased population growth;
c) investigate options, based on intrastate, interstate and international evidence which reduce pressure on infrastructure services;
d) catalogue the skills mix of outer suburban residents to identify those areas with a skills shortage and provide options for skills training and retention, as it relates to both younger and semi-retired people;
e) examine the role of small businesses, local councils and community groups (such as Rotary and Lions clubs) in developing local expertise;
f) investigate the value of sister city relationships with key trade and innovation markets;
and
g) identify manufacturing capacity and highlight export development opportunities available for businesses operating in the outer suburbs.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry.

The first point I wish to make goes back to the 1967 MMBW document “The Future Growth of Melbourne.” The Committee may think going back to a 1967 planning document is irrelevant but I will endeavour to explain its relevancy.

There are 8 plans in the document being:-
Plan 1 The Present Pattern;
Plan 2 Controlled Outward Growth;
Plan 3 Metropolitan Satellite Cities;
Plan 4 Metropolitan Satellite Cities and Limited Outward Growth;
Plan 5 Metropolitan Growth Corridors;
Plan 6 Redirected Growth;
Plan 7 Corridor - Satellite Growth; and
Plan 8 Proposed Metropolitan Planning Region.
In all of the plans in this document the Hurstbridge Railway line has been omitted despite its existence dating back to 1912 which in my view means the entire planning system as we know it today has evolved around misleading information.

To my limited knowledge this was the first MMBW document to refer to the planning system we know today, seen in Plan 5 – Metropolitan Growth Corridors. In Plan 5 we clearly see the Whittlesea Railway Line, depicted as “disused” and the absence of the existing Hurstbridge Railway Line.

Given that the document was done in 1967 – eight years after the Whittlesea Railway Line closed - one would have to ask why the ‘disused’ section of the line was not completely omitted from the document. Could there have been ulterior motives or some sort of influential pressure behind its inclusion to mislead the planners/readers into believing the line was still operational?

The same could be said of the omission of the Hurstbridge Railway Line. Why was it not included? Could there have been ulterior motives or some sort of influential pressure behind its omission to mislead the planners/readers into believing there was no railway line?

What we are left with now is Whittlesea, one of Melbourne’s largest growth corridors with massive residential development but without heavy rail infrastructure, and Hurstbridge with existing heavy rail infrastructure but no development. It makes no sense at all.

All of the above I believe is relevant and contributes to the reason Nillumbik is a ‘dormitory’ shire.

I believe investigation into this matter by the Committee is warranted.

We want to see something proactive happening out here in Nillumbik. We are sick of the stagnation, sick of the ever increasing rates and sick of our private property having been commandeered for many years as part of the ‘conservation estate’ – ie: the green wedge – without any fiscal responsibility being taken by responsible governments and authorities. “Planning,” so I was advised by the former Department of Infrastructure,” is meant to be dynamic”. Here is an opportunity to make it “dynamic.”

Term of reference (b) assess the capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate increased population growth:

It is not only best practice but common sense to maximise the use of existing infrastructure. I believe it is neither feasible nor sustainable that Nillumbik remains a ‘dormitory’ shire. Nillumbik is part of metropolitan Melbourne and there is indeed capacity within the existing infrastructure to accommodate increased population growth.

The existing major infrastructure in Nillumbik has already been paid for by taxpayers but is currently under utilised. As well as the usual water, electricity and telecommunications the Eltham Main Sewer extends to Hurstbridge as does gas. The existing sewer is located parallel between the Diamond Creek and the Hurstbridge railway line. Given this infrastructure I believe all available land along the existing railway corridor from Hurstbridge to Diamond Creek should be appropriately zoned to accommodate residential development.

Use of the Hurstbridge Railway line should be maximised. The completion of a double line to Hurstbridge would be a great improvement.
Use of the Eltham Main Sewer should be maximised.

Residential development along existing railway lines would not only be commonsense but would have positive social, economic and environmental benefits. For example, between Diamond Creek and Hurstbridge there would be the benefit of several kilometres of private land along the creek being transferred for the benefit of the community, such as for bicycle and walking paths.

Nillumbik is well served with schools, both public and private. Tertiary education is available nearby. There are many medical facilities, such as doctors’ surgeries, clinics and related services such as pharmacies, diagnostic facilities and Nillumbik is in close proximity to major hospitals, Austin at Heidelberg and Northern at Epping.

We heard at the OSISDC hearings at Eltham that traders were concerned about the slippage of customers. If townships like Diamond Creek and Hurstbridge were able to expand it would make them far more vibrant places to shop and reduce the current slippage.

**Term of reference (g) identify local manufacturing capacity and highlight export development opportunities available for businesses operating in the outer suburbs.**

Despite the anti-development stance of Nillumbik Council provision definitely needs to be made for some light industry in both Hurstbridge and Diamond Creek. Diamond Creek has some but needs to expand. Hurstbridge needs some light industry. Each Council should play its part in encouraging local jobs growth.

To enable manufacturing and export development opportunities across Melbourne there must be quick and easy access to freight terminals and the Port of Melbourne. A major restriction on efficient freight movement is the general traffic congestion on the entire metropolitan road system. The ‘missing link’ in the Metropolitan Ring Road needs to be completed linking Greensborough and Ringwood — not by way of a hugely expensive tunnel through Banyule — but by the quickest most direct route through Nillumbik. Because it currently ends in a “T” intersection at Greensborough, the congestion has a flow-on detrimental effect for the remainder of an otherwise reasonably efficient Ring Road. This road gives access to other major roads and freeways and needs to run smoothly A ‘Ring Road’ needs to be a ‘complete ring’ around Melbourne and should be high on the agenda of the incumbent State Government.

I look forward to the Committee’s recommendations.

Anne Stoneman,