9 December 2011

Mr. Nathan Bunt
Executive Officer
Outer Suburban/Interface Services & Development Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Dear Mr. Bunt,

PIA Victorian Division Submission to the Inquiry into Infrastructure and Business Development in Outer Suburban Melbourne

The Planning Institute of Australia’s (PIA) Victorian Division welcomes the opportunity to make a submission into to the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee’s Inquiry into Infrastructure and Business Development in Outer Suburban Melbourne. Please note that the Planning Institute also made a separate submission to the recent Inquiry into Liveability Options in Outer Suburban Melbourne, conducted in the first half of 2011.

As noted in Jan Kronberg, MLC’s letter of 31 October 2011, the Planning Institute of Australia has a strong interest in this inquiry, as planning has a significant impact on infrastructure and business development. These are both integral to creating liveable and sustainable communities by addressing issues such as population growth, employment and amenity. PIA has addressed the most relevant terms of reference below.

(a) Identify existing public and private infrastructure provision, including schools, hospitals, commercial and shopping precincts, transport and roads, telecommunications, water and power. No comment.

(b) Assess the capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate increased population growth

www.planning.org.au
Previous strategic planning for Melbourne (*Melbourne 2030*), was informed by a significantly underestimated growth rate for Victoria. Our existing infrastructure is a result of this and earlier planning, and is therefore not adequate to accommodate the much higher population now expected of Melbourne in the short term future. In recent years, it has become apparent that Melbourne’s existing infrastructure is already inadequate for accommodating our city’s rapidly booming population.

PIA recently undertook a survey of its member’s as part of its submission to the current review of Victoria’s planning system. One of the most notable results of the survey was that planners believe the provision of infrastructure, particularly public transport and particularly in growth areas, is the biggest issue facing the planning system today.

There are, however, opportunities to accommodate a proportion of the increased population by ensuring that what infrastructure does exist in Melbourne is used to its full capacity, through the facilitation of infill development in areas where existing infrastructure is either under-utilized or could have its capacity increased with relative ease (in comparison with providing entirely new infrastructure in a growth area). Term of Reference c) will address this in more detail.

(c) Investigate options, based on intrastate, interstate and international evidence, which reduce pressures on infrastructure and essential services

PIA advocates, as a matter of priority, for the integration of transport, infrastructure provision and land-use planning, ‘prevention is better than a cure’, as retrofitting infrastructure in developed areas can be a difficult and expensive process, and it is more preferable to get it right in the first place. The integration of these services, all designed to serve the population, provides the best opportunity to provide co-ordinated and appropriate infrastructure, both in greenfield and infill development.

Decisions regarding transport investment, mode and location have had a huge impact upon the development of Australia’s regions and cities. Yet in many instances land use planning and decision making has occurred with little or no regard for resultant impacts on transport and
movement, funding or investment. Additionally, transport plans and investment decisions continue to occur with an inadequate understanding of the land use and development consequences of such decision making. For example, while one decision to approve higher density housing in a particular area may have minimal impact on that area, the overall impact of many similar decisions can have a substantial effect on arterial roads. The impact of these decisions is not consistently modelled and therefore not predicted. The budgeting for road improvements is therefore often ad hoc and subject to political processes rather than logical planning.

In terms of specific suggestions, the Planning Institute supports an overhaul of Melbourne’s public transport system to produce a ‘metro style’ system. The current system is dominated by a radial transport network, where the train and tram lines are ‘spokes’ which all lead to the CBD in the centre. This limits cross-town trips (i.e. from one ‘spoke’ to another) to bus or private transport. As communities develop further out from the city, the further the distance between spokes, thus decreasing access to public transport and ease of cross-town trips in outer suburban Melbourne.

A metro-style system would facilitate cross-town trips, allowing passengers to jump between train lines without needing to travel all the way in to the city. This would reduce pressure on trains going in and out of the CBD, and increasing accessibility in outer suburban Melbourne whilst also decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.

(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, especially as it relates to both younger and semi-retired people. No comment

(e) Examine the role of small businesses, local councils and community groups (such as Rotary and Lions clubs) in developing local expertise

Communities which provide homes, employment and amenities locally have significant economic, environmental and social benefits. Local Councils have a significant role to play in facilitating these things, including local business.

www.planning.org.au
It is important that, like housing, councils also plan for and facilitate a diverse range of business options which allow businesses to grow in place, rather than having to relocate to the CBD or industrial parks when they reach a certain size.

For more details on this issue, PIA suggests the Committee review work done by the Growth Areas Authority on planning for local businesses as part of their draft Corridor Plans.

(f) Investigate the value of sister city relationships with key trade and innovation markets. No comment

(g) Identify local manufacturing capacity and highlight export development opportunities available for businesses operating in the outer suburbs.

It is important that ports, freight hubs and airports are accessible to the outer suburbs in order to facilitate the manufacturing and export of goods where it is applicable.

The Planning Institute would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these issues further. If you require more information or a meeting, please contact the PIA Victorian Executive Officer, Stuart Worn on 9347 1900 or at sworn@planning.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Dunn, MPIA CPP
President
Planning Institute Australia, Victorian Division