21 December 2011

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Parliament of Victoria  
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La Trobe University Submission

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

La Trobe University welcomes the opportunity to make a submission addressing the Terms of Reference for the above-mentioned inquiry.

Yours sincerely

David Ensor  
Vice-President (Operations) and Chief Operating Officer
Inquiry on Growing the Suburbs: Infrastructure and Business Development in Outer Suburban Melbourne

(a) Identify existing public and private infrastructure provision, including schools, hospitals, commercial and shopping precincts, transport and roads, telecommunications, water, power

The following overview of La Trobe University is provided as context in support of the above:

La Trobe University's founding mission was, and remains, to serve the community of Victoria for the purposes of higher education, for the education, economic, social and cultural benefit of Victorians and for wider Australian and international communities. From inception, La Trobe has been particularly focused on providing access to quality higher education to those from disadvantaged backgrounds and has become an internationally recognised leader in this field. Innovation in teaching and research was, and remains, central to the La Trobe mission. From its beginnings as a single campus, metropolitan University in Bundoora, La Trobe has expanded its presence across Victoria, through a merger with the Wodonga Institute of Tertiary Education in 1991 and the establishment in 1991 of the La Trobe University College of Northern Victoria, incorporating the Bendigo College of Advanced Education. La Trobe University has campuses in Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo, Melbourne (Bundoora), Mildura and Shepparton.

La Trobe’s Melbourne Campus at Bundoora is the largest in terms of effective full-time student load (18,135 effective full-time students as at March 2011) and employs more than 2,500 staff in academic and professional positions. La Trobe is the second largest employer in the Northern Metropolitan region.

La Trobe is committed to increased student access, retention and success. The University's current Strategic Plan (Vision 2015) commits the University to increase undergraduate domestic enrolments by 30 percent between 2009 and 2015, focusing on increased low socio-economic student participation. It also commits the University to increase taught postgraduate enrolments by 50 percent, focusing on building the advanced skills needed by the Victorian and National economy. The University will also achieve its growth ambitions...
through School and TAFE partnerships including the innovative Curriculum Bridges, a project in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). These educational partnerships are intended to raise awareness and build the aspirations of secondary school students in the Northern metropolitan region and ensuring there are clear and effective pathways into the University.

The following research strengths are La Trobe's designated areas of research focus. These areas have been identified on the basis of outstanding performance of La Trobe staff against a number of criteria such as: academic publications, success in the receipt of competitive grant funding, national and international research collaborations, prizes, conference participation, public commentary and intellectual leadership.

- **Agribioscience and the Environment**: Affiliated organisational areas include the AgriBio, the Centre for AgriBioscience, the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Plant Biosecurity, the CRC for Molecular Plant Breeding, the Bushfire CRC, the Centre for Sustainable Regional Communities, as well as Departments/Programs including Botany and Zoology.

- **Health and Society**: Includes diverse research involving the interaction of health with society. Affiliated organisational areas include the National Stroke Research Institute, Cooperative Research Centre in Aboriginal Health, Research Centres in Sex, Health and Society, Mother and Child Health, Musculoskeletal Research, Australian Centre for Evidence Based Aged Care and Australian Institute for Primary Care, as well as Departments/Programs in Nursing, Psychology, Physiotherapy and Public Health.

- **Human Behaviour and Thought**: Includes research in cognitive and developmental psychology, neuropsychology, social psychology, mind, logic and language, environmental ethics and policy, European philosophy, mathematics and statistics and computer science. Affiliated organisational areas include the ARC Centre of Excellence for Mathematics and Statistics of Complex Systems, the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre, as well as Departments/Programs in Psychology, Philosophy, Mathematics and Statistics and Computer Science.

- **Human Communication**: Includes research from Linguistics, English and Media Studies. Affiliated organisational areas including the Research Centre in Linguistic Typology, the Research Centre of Contemporary Greek Studies, the Australian Migrant English Program, as well as Departments/Schools in Asian Studies, Education and English. Leading international scholars in Linguistics and English.

- **Human Society and Organisation**: Includes research from a variety of areas in the way society is organised and functions around politics, sociology, business, the economy and law. Affiliated organisational areas include the Innovative Universities European Union Centre, the Centre for Dialogue, as well as Departments/Programs in Economics and Finance, Law, Management and Marketing, Graduate School of Management, Management and Accounting, Politics, Social Work and Sociology. In Politics, principal contributor to Australian public affairs; in Cultural Sociology, prominent international contributor.

- **Molecular Science**: Includes a variety of research that involves the study of molecules and ways to image them and encompasses parts of traditional disciplines of microbiology, biochemistry, chemistry and physics. Encompasses the Australian Institute of Molecular Medicine, the Centre for Materials and Surface Science, as well as Departments/Programs in Biochemistry, Physics and Chemistry.

- **Studies of the Past**: Includes a wide variety of research broadly in history and archaeology. Encompasses the Departments/Programs in History and Archaeology. Leading international scholars in Archaeology and History.
Assess the capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate increased population growth

La Trobe University is centrally located in a Northern Melbourne community of approximately 1 million people living in seven local government areas: Banyule City Council, Darebin City Council, Hume City Council, Moreland City Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, the City of Whittlesea and the City of Yarra. The population in the region is set to increase markedly, with well in excess of 25% of Melbourne’s population growth (forecast population of 5 million) targeted for Melbourne’s North, particularly Hume and Whittlesea. This rich and diverse community of people, businesses and environmental aspects will become a vibrant market and opportunity for the University.

The central location of the University represents extraordinary potential for La Trobe to undertake a leadership role in the ongoing development of a region that includes mature suburbs such as Preston and Coburg which are undergoing rapid gentrification at the same time as Whittlesea and Hume are significant new growth areas in greater Melbourne under the Growth Areas Authority framework.

La Trobe University is forming new, and strengthening existing, partnerships to explore innovative ways of working with local and state government, leaders in business and the community to fully realise these opportunities. The University is committed to consolidating and extending mutually beneficial arrangements with other tertiary education providers, in particular, with TAFE institutes, to address the skills development and skills deepening required to supporting an economy based on knowledge, skills and innovation.

The University is working on a capital development plan for defined projects including new buildings, adaptive reuse of existing buildings and infrastructure upgrades together with costs and an indicative development program for the next 10 years.

La Trobe’s planning for future growth is in the context of some of the following projections:

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**Household Projections to 2026**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LGA</th>
<th>Projected Household Projections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whittlesea</td>
<td>43,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume</td>
<td>36,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreland</td>
<td>14,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darebin</td>
<td>11,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarra</td>
<td>9,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banyule</td>
<td>8,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nillumbik</td>
<td>3,717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 Source: Meeting the Challenges of Planning Melbourne’s Growth Areas, Growth Areas Authority, November 2010
La Trobe supports the Growth Areas Authority position that Melbourne must stop creating dormitory suburbs and invest in the development of transport infrastructure and services that will ensure the outer northern suburbs are attractive, affordable and desirable places to live and work in.

A significant issue for La Trobe University is the public transport options to the Melbourne Campus, Bundoora. While the University has plans and capacity to grow enrolments at its Melbourne Campus, which will be required as Melbourne’s North expands, a potential limiting factor is accessibility to appropriate public transport options for students. To address public transport options La Trobe University is currently developing a Public Transport Strategy. The Strategy will identify barriers to achieving maximum public transport access to the Melbourne Campus, as well as looking into the provision of public transport services in the Northern Growth Corridor. The Strategy will provide the foundation for lobbying public transport stakeholders in the future development of public transport infrastructure, and services for La Trobe University staff and students.

A Survey of New Undergraduate Students was conducted at La Trobe from 2003 to 2008 inclusive, which shows that students overwhelming use their private cars to travel to Campus.

- The First Year Experience Survey (2009) showed that 72.5% of La Trobe first year students spent four days or less on Campus (compared with national average of 65.1%).

- Of the 24.3% of La Trobe students who stated they had seriously considered deferring/discontinuing in their first semester, problems with daily travel was a reason cited 30%.
Investigate options, based on intrastate, interstate and international evidence, which reduce pressures on infrastructure and essential services

La Trobe aims to provide students with a supportive and challenging learning environment in which they can develop their academic and personal capabilities and skills, and thereby become effective, educated and ethical graduates.

The University curriculum review program ensures that academic programs are continually updated and are appropriately flexible and, while La Trobe intends to increasingly use technology (as the NBN becomes available) to support flexible teaching and learning activities, the University will continue to ensure that students gain maximum educational and social value from their face-to-face interactions on Campus with our expert staff and with their peers.

The University’s infrastructure planning encompasses a number of intersecting higher education issues in the context of future growth. These include the

- demand for more flexible learning areas;
- demand for more interactive based learning environments, and
- demand for more learning commons, student social spaces and student interactive zones.

The University is undertaking the necessary required upgrades to its engineering infrastructure to support the achievement of a low carbon footprint. For example, La Trobe University operates a cogeneration gas fired power plant, reducing the reliance on the national electricity grid and the reliance on carbon intensive coal fired electricity generation in Victoria. In 2010 the cogeneration plant supplied two-thirds of the Melbourne Campus’ electricity demand.

La Trobe University has implemented the Australia Government TravelSmart initiative, this has been a central factor in decreasing the number of single occupancy vehicles entering the Melbourne Campus and increasing the use of public transport amongst staff and students by 20%. This has slowed the increase of demand on car parking infrastructure as well as reduced traffic congestion in the local community. State governments in Victoria and New South Wales have remained strongly opposed to extending travel concessions for full-time students to international students. Universities Australia and La Trobe University have maintained a clear position of extending public transport subsidies for international students.
In 2011, La Trobe University has put in public place recycling bins, which have diverted approximately 74 tonnes of recyclables from landfill in the first three months.

(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

La Trobe University was located in the emerging Northern suburbs of the 1960’s as a University to serve a new community. Approaching its 50th Anniversary, the University again has a central role to play in the next phase of development of Melbourne’s North.

The charts below show the percentages of 15-19 and 20-24 year olds who have completed Year 11 or Year 12, based on Census 2006 data. The best measure of secondary completion rates comes from the 20-24 age group since many in the 15-19 age group will still be at school. The following comments are based on the 20-24 age group. With the exception of Hume (and possibly Whittlesea) all LGAs have secondary school participation rates at or above the overall Melbourne figure. The figure for Hume of 64.2% is well below the Melbourne figure of 74.6%.

![Chart showing University Participation (%) by Local Government Area (2006 census data)]
In the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne the LGAs Darebin and Yarra have the highest university participation with rates of 26.0% and 26.9% respectively, well above the overall Melbourne figure of 19.4%. Hume, Whittlesea and Nillumbik have participation rates below the overall Melbourne figure, of particular note is the participation rate for Hume (9.9%), which is around half the overall Melbourne figure.

La Trobe is committed to building the educational aspirations of communities in Melbourne’s North. La Trobe’s partnership with the State Government in the Charles La Trobe College is one manifestation of this commitment. Associated with this project, Quantum Victoria is a centre of excellence and innovation in science and mathematics education which will have a state-wide responsibility for increasing student interest and knowledge in science and mathematics, as well as being an integral part of the College. The La Trobe Institute of Molecular Sciences (LIMS; the $64m building funded by the Education Investment Fund is due for completion in 2012) is supporting researchers in biochemistry and cell biology. When fully operational the Institute will engage with around 2,500 secondary school students annually, giving them exposure to leading scientists and fostering their interest in science.

The Curriculum Bridges project is being conducted in partnership with the Victorian Government DEECD and three state schools – Mill Park Secondary College, Reservoir Secondary College and Bendigo Senior Secondary College. Through a themed curriculum approach, students in years 10, 11 and 12 are engaged in study of the STEM disciplines. With the strong involvement of La Trobe University staff working with school staff, the opportunities and pathways to tertiary study are promoted. Students completing the Curriculum Bridges program are eligible for special entry arrangements.

The Schools Access La Trobe Scheme (SALT) enables students from selected schools to apply for entry into a degree program at La Trobe University based on a written application supported by a school recommendation. The scheme is aimed at schools where the proportion of Year 12 students enrolling at university has averaged 50 per cent or less over the past two years, and schools in low socioeconomic status areas. There are over 120 Victorian schools with proximity to one of our campuses who are included in the SALT scheme and another 48 in NSW and South Australia. Of the Victorian schools in SALT, over 30 are located in outer suburban regions. La Trobe’s strategic partnerships with TAFEs are focused around collaborative development of pathways (diplomas, enabling programs) to higher education, with particular focus on providing access for under-represented students and the sharing of facilities and resources, where appropriate. The University is extending its accredited Tertiary Enabling Program (TEP), which has been successfully offered at the Albury-Wodonga Campus since 1990, to the other regional campuses in Bendigo, Mildura and Shepparton in partnership with regional TAFE providers Bendigo TAFE (Bendigo), SunTAFE (Mildura) and GOTAFE (Shepparton). The University is also currently exploring options for offering the TEP in Melbourne’s North through the Global Learning Village at Broadmeadows in the Hume region. The Program is a pre-degree course designed to create pathways to higher education for people who might not otherwise be eligible to apply. It is included as a category in our Alternative Entry schemes. The program in Albury-Wodonga attracts a high proportion of low SES students and has also attracted significant numbers of refugee students in recent years. Graduates of the program describe it as life changing.

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

La Trobe is committed to developing further the strong links that already exist between each of its metropolitan and regional campuses and the local communities in which the University is located and which it serves. Research shows that universities drive economic, social and cultural innovation through knowledge exchange between university staff, students, and the broader community. By supporting and responding to the educational and research needs of the community in which each campus is located, La Trobe will enhance its own strength and reputation, and play a major role in local economic and social development.
La Trobe interacts with and contributes to these communities through teaching and research, which is designed to enrich and develop their economic, professional, social and cultural fabric. The University has a range of industry engagement activities including an Industry Expo, industry days for senior staff and senior staff visit programs. The University maintains strong links with industry through its campus based research and development parks at Bundoora and Bendigo and sees these links as critical to maintaining the relevance of its teaching and research. La Trobe also extends the links to industry through cadetships, clinical placements, practicum’s and work experience, particularly in health sciences, civil engineering and teacher education, and is expanding the program across a range of other disciplines in the work ready Bachelor of Arts.

La Trobe is also committed to relevant research to build local communities. La Trobe University has over 30 University and faculty-based research centres and institutes and is a participant in 7 Cooperative Research Centres, hosts 5 national and international research institutes and is engaged in numerous joint ventures with other research organisations, industry and government bodies.

The University also plays an important role in developing local expertise through effective community based project, for example:

Northern Interfaith/Intercultural Network: La Trobe University Centre for Dialogue. The overall aim of this project is to design a model for a dynamic and sustainable interfaith and intercultural network for the northern region of Melbourne, a region famous for its cultural diversity. It is based on active collaboration between the Centre for Dialogue, five municipalities and eight partner organizations from the faith and cultural sectors. The first regionally developed network of its kind in Australia, this innovative, three year project aims to engage with local communities to identify their common social concerns. The network connects various community-related organisations, such as government, religious, media, sporting, education and welfare bodies, and coordinates with, supplements and enhances any pre-existing community based projects.

The La Trobe Refugee Research Centre (LaRRC) works to promote the wellbeing, participation and social inclusion of people with refugee backgrounds through applied and foundation research, teaching, continuing education and professional development with a particular focus on young people, emerging communities, refugee protection and service innovation and community strengthening.

(f) Investigate the value of sister city relationships with key trade and innovation markets

International sister city or region relationships can be valuable when they support trade and development strategy by focusing attention on a limited number of useful markets and sub-markets. These relationships tend to be used as a basis for periodically bringing together two groups of players, one from each city or region, from whichever spheres of public and private activity are relevant to the two parties. They may include representatives of the government entities responsible accompanied by representatives of local business, the professions, public and private sectors, exporters of goods and services, etc.

However, this springboard effort can only be the starting point and the true value of a sister city is reflected in the number and proportion of local industries, businesses and services from both sides that move toward working more closely together or that increase their sales or market reach as a consequence. As rewarding as sister city/region relationships can be to promote international and intercultural understanding, the relationships take work to identify, develop and then monitor to ensure the mutual benefits are promoted and realised. Effective sister city/region relationships must be adequately resourced and evaluated to ensure that the resourcing needs do not outweigh the long-term benefit for the local area.
(g) Identify local manufacturing capacity and highlight export development opportunities available for businesses operating in the outer suburbs

Melbourne’s North is highly diverse, and its inner areas are transitioning to a knowledge economy and the creative industries as manufacturing, logistics and warehousing activities increase in the outer areas. NORTH Link’s economic development strategy, *Melbourne’s North – the new knowledge economy* states, ‘manufacturing remains a strategic industry for the region, even though jobs in this sector continue to decline. It has suffered over recent years by many operators moving offshore. However, opportunities exist to build advanced manufacturing businesses and so increase manufacturing employment. Examples include automotive ‘green car’ cluster activities, biotechnology associated with medical hub and tertiary research institutions, and increased food cluster activity associated with the relocated market development.’

La Trobe University’s Melbourne Campus at Bundoora is a major service provider in the northern area of Melbourne, and a significant exporter of education services for the State. The Campus currently hosts over 5500 international students comprising about 26% of the Campus population of 22,689 (La Trobe University Planning and Institutional Performance Unit: Summary of Student Demographics (Persons) 2010) and the majority of these students live in the northern suburbs. As one of the larger providers of international education in Victoria, La Trobe contributes significantly to this $4.8 billion export industry, by far the State’s largest export industry (ABS, 2011).

As an indication of the University’s international reach, La Trobe has a large number of agreements defining research, teaching and student exchange relationships with institutions in over 30 countries with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region. The University also currently enrolls over 600 international students who have been sponsored by more than 25 overseas government departments and employers around the world. Most of these relationships operate at a whole-of-University level, while others are Faculty-specific and focused on particular research groups. All of these contribute to La Trobe University’s international profile. La Trobe is consistently identified in the top 500 Universities in the world.