Infrastructure and Business Development in Outer Suburban Melbourne

Introduction

This submission to the Outer Suburban Interface Services and Development Committee addresses the desired outcomes critical to the long term economic sustainability of Wyndham City with particular emphasis on the following elements of Council’s Economic Development Strategy:

1. local employment creation generated by investment attraction
2. local employment creation generated by business growth
3. development of workforce skills to meet the needs of business
4. access to education programs and education providers that will prepare the future workforce
5. responding to the rapid shift toward a knowledge based economy

Wyndham City

Wyndham City, located in the outer west of Melbourne is one of seven designated Victorian growth areas. The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data measured the city’s population growth for the period 2009-2010 at an unprecedented 8.8%, 12,600 people. This confirms Wyndham City as the fastest growing municipality in Australia in percentage terms and third fastest in absolute numbers. When combined with Melton, the region of Outer Western Melbourne is the fastest and largest growing in the country.

Comprising the predominantly residential suburbs of Werribee, Hoppers Crossing, Point Cook, Sanctuary Lakes, Tarneit, Truganina and Wyndham Vale and the small rural township of Little River the city also boasts one of Melbourne’s largest industrial precincts at Laverton North.

Strategically situated on the Princes Freeway halfway between the Melbourne Central Business District and the City of Geelong, Wyndham is bounded to the east by the Western Metropolitan Ring Road and to the south by Port Phillip Bay.

The culturally diverse city is also home to 3000 hectares of market gardens and a major tourism precinct which includes Werribee Park Mansion, the Werribee Open Range Zoo and National Equestrian Centre.
The Werribee City Centre, located on the third largest river in Melbourne is the principal activity Centre within Wyndham, with a Council endorsed precinct structure plan encouraging high density multi level living, mixed with office and activated retail development. Connection to the State Government owned Werribee Employment Precinct is aimed at positioning Wyndham City as the “Capital of Melbourne’s New West”.

Other major retail and business activity centres include the Point Cook Town Centre, Werribee Plaza the Old Geelong Road precinct at Hoppers Crossing and the soon to be expanded Manor Lakes Shopping Centre will be joined by a planned activity centre and railway station at Wyndham’s newest suburb Williams Landing.

**Economic, Employment and Education Overview**

- ABS measures show that the highest concentration of businesses by industry sector in the city are:
  - Construction
  - Transport & Logistics
  - Professional & Technical Services *(Table 1)*

- Most recent available ABS Census data (2006) indicated that 33.2% of Wyndham’s resident workforce was employed in the municipality. This figure is only marginally better than the 2001 figure of 33.1% *(Table 2)*

- The balance of the resident workforce that leaves the municipality to work at other destinations places significant stress on roads, public transport services, the environment and community wellbeing

- The high level of residents working elsewhere impacts significantly on expenditure leakage and as a consequence the level of economic activity within the city

- Wyndham City residents are not attaining a critical level of education and skills development to meet the demands of the future economy. *(Tables 5 & 6)*

- Wyndham City lacks a critical mass of employment opportunities for professional and semi professional resident workers

- The Laverton North / Truganina Precinct located within the western industrial node is recognised as a major manufacturing and logistics hub providing significant locational advantages including access to ports, airports, freeways and the Melbourne Central Business District

- The Werribee Irrigation District comprises 3000 hectares of green wedge zoned market gardening land for the cultivation of broad leaf vegetables including cauliflower, cabbage and lettuce

- Wyndham City is home to a suite of tourism products and experiences including the Werribee Open Range Zoo, Werribee Park Mansion, National Equestrian Centre and the Point Cook Coastal Park

- Wyndham City has a clear vision to develop the Werribee City Centre and Werribee Employment Precinct to be the “Capital of Melbourne’s New West”
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Source: ABS Census of Australian Businesses

Table 2

**Employment location of residents**

- Within the City: 57.5%
- Outside the City: 33.2%
- Work location unknown or not stated: 9.3%

**Residential location of workers**

- Live and work within the City: 51.5%
- Live outside, but work within the City: 48.4%

Creating Employment Opportunities for the Resident Workforce

Access to local employment has a capacity to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits. In the first instance a higher level of local employment promotes an environment for consuming locally and lessening the consequences of expenditure leakage. At a broader community enhancement and liveability level a high level of local employment has a direct impact on reducing congestion costs and green house gas emissions associated with long journey to work trips.

In a social context, less time on the road provides more opportunity for resident workers to spend time engaging with families, friends and the broader community; all important drivers in achieving a higher quality of living.

Whilst improvements to the existing road and public transport is critical for greater and more efficient connectivity it is Council’s view that the most desirable means of effectively reducing the volume of road and public transport traffic is through the creation of employment opportunities closer to home.

A commitment to the long term development of Melbourne to a polycentric city will not only be economically, environmentally and socially beneficial to Wyndham City and the outer growth areas but also to greater Melbourne and the State of Victoria.

Werribee Employment Precinct

Previously known as the Werribee Agricultural and Food Technology Precinct the 925 hectare parcel of Victorian Government owned land bounded by the Princes Highway and Princes Freeway east of the Werribee City Centre was first designated as the Werribee Employment Precinct (WEP) in the “Melbourne 2030 Planning Update, Melbourne @5 Million”.

The precinct is currently home to a number of research and development organisations including CSIRO Food and Nutritional Sciences, the Dairy Innovation Centre and Agrifood Technology. The Werribee campus of Victoria University, Melbourne University Veterinary Clinic and the new select entry school, Suzanne Cory High School are also located on the precinct.

Mercy Health’s Werribee Mercy Hospital is also on the site and a major multi disciplinary medical and allied health centre, Wyndham Private, is currently under construction on part of an eight hectare parcel of land under private ownership.

Owners of this privately held land have developed a full master plan which is being marketed under the name of “Catalyst”. The master plan includes provision for a private hospital, multi level office and high density residential development.

Council, in consultation with the Growth Areas Authority and the Department of Planning and Community Development has utilised the services of Denton Corker Marshall to prepare a vision document for the core area of the WEP lying west and north of the Princes Highway. This document articulates a number of precincts which focus on medium density mixed use, education, health, food and agricultural research, arts & culture and justice. The vision includes a boulevard that in part is designed to create a natural connection to the Werribee City Centre.
With a focus on “white collar” employment the WEP will be well positioned to address the current limited access to employment requiring professional and semi professional skilled labour.

With these visions and plans the WEP has the potential to provide for the delivery of 50,000 jobs and residential development to house 30,000 people.

A Precinct Structure Plan, which is predominantly residential development, is scheduled to be placed on public exhibition on 13 January 2012 for the section of the WEP that lies east of the Princes Highway. (Point Cook West)

Importantly the sale of land on the WEP has the capacity to not only generate a return to the State but revenue from the sale could be utilised to fund the necessary infrastructure projects.

Key Infrastructure projects that need to be given early priority include:

- A full diamond interchange at Sneydes Road and the Maltby bypass to provide efficient access and egress for both the WEP and Point Cook
- A new station on the Werribee line at Derrimut Road;
- Grade separation of the Old Geelong Road over the rail line at Hopers Crossing with a new intersection to Hoppers Lane and the Princes Highway;
- A new road through the heart of the WEP connecting Derrimut Road to Sneydes Road in Point Cook, including a full diamond interchange with the Princes Freeway;
- A boulevard road connection from Werribee City Centre to through the WEP to Hoppers lane and continuing on the Dunnings Road Point Cook
- A defining physical theme to the development of the WEP (eg water and environment)

Council is keen to establish a close partnership with the Government to ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved and that the infrastructure required to attract investment and employment is planned, resourced and delivered.
Werribee City Centre

To serve the growing population, Wyndham and Melbourne’s west will require a regional capital city as a focal point. The Werribee City Centre, together with the Werribee Employment Precinct, is envisioned as the capital of Melbourne’s new west: ‘Werribee City’.

A Precinct Structure Plan has been drafted following significant stakeholder and community engagement. The PSP documents set out a vision and planning framework for the future Werribee City Centre. A two month public exhibition of the Werribee City PSP will be undertaken commencing in January 2012.

Wyndham City’s aim is to create an environment that is highly attractive to private development, investment and business in the Werribee City Centre. To assist in achieving this aim, Council plans to invest $20 million over the next 5 years on major projects to enhance and embrace the Werribee City Centre’s central river and park.

Table 3: Werribee City PSP & Connection to WEP

A piazza has recently completed construction with the aim of providing a focal point for community gatherings and activating the City Centre. An architecturally designed bridge connecting the retail precinct to Wyndham Park is also nearing completion with future projects including a boardwalk on the south of the Werribee River aimed at connecting a significant part of the Watton Street commercial strip and “turning development around” to face and embrace the unique setting of the Werribee River.

Wyndham City is also planning to make the key sites it owns in the Werribee City Centre available for landmark private developments, and welcomes the potential to further develop existing partnerships and establish new partnerships to achieve shared objectives in the Werribee City Centre.
With the WEP development and Council’s plans for the Werribee City Centre, the proposed connected precincts have the capacity to grow to a major commercial, retail and public transport hub. In population terms, Wyndham City is already larger than Dandenong and on current projections the city will one day rival Geelong.

Whilst it is well understood that private development is the ultimate driver of investment and employment, Council is disappointed at the lack of any significant state funding or commitment afforded to the development and governance arrangements for Werribee City Centre.

Council understands the economic, social and environmental benefits of funding renewal projects in the outer metropolitan growth areas, including those at Dandenong, Broadmeadows and Frankston. This paper has previously referred to the advantages of a polycentric Melbourne, however recent State Government have downplayed Werribee’s role as a major activity centre for commercial, retail and residential development.

**Industrial Development: Logistics & Freight**

Historically Wyndham City has developed and grown through a strong and robust industrial labour base. The Laverton North Industrial Precinct has been the traditional home of manufacturing and over more recent times to the ever expanding transport and logistics industry. This growth has been driven by locational advantage and affordability and the availability of large parcels of land. Wyndham City has been active in promoting the region and working closely with developers to facilitate responsible development conducive to employment outcomes.

In an exceptionally competitive but healthy environment, logistics operations are seeking locational and connectivity advantages to ensure that running costs associated with freight movement are minimised. The precinct is experiencing exceptionally high levels of semi-trailer and b-double freight movements on a 24 hour basis. Major distribution operations of firms such as Coles, Woolworths, Linfox and IGA are expanding and consolidating their Australia wide operations with warehouses of 50,000m² and more the norm.

All levels of government need to be mindful that as the region continues to expand and develop as the major transport and logistics hub of Melbourne that ongoing investment in roads and other traffic management infrastructure is critical to the long term viability of the region.

Council supports the development of an inter model freight terminal within the Western Industrial Node. The terminal would provide a significant attractor for future investment in warehouse distribution centres, the manufacturing industry and industries both upstream and downstream of those two sectors.

Under the Truganina Employment Precinct Structure Plan a majority of the existing land holdings are currently designated as part of the rail freight investigation area as identified by the Department of Transport. *(Table 4)*

Whilst Council understands the need to plan effectively to ensure the best possible outcome, concern is expressed in the time frame in reaching a final decision on the alignment of the line. This ongoing lack of certainty is not within the interest of current land owners and future commercial and industrial developers of the precinct.
Tourism

Wyndham City is home to a suite of tourism products, experiences and attractions that attract a diverse range of visitor markets. The Werribee Park Tourism Precinct, including the Werribee Open Range Zoo and Werribee Mansion, is one of the iconic attractions in the region with an estimated 70% of visitors to the Western Melbourne region visiting the Tourism Precinct during their stay (Destination Attractiveness Survey, 2010).

The region is also home to a variety of other tourism attractions that appeal to visitor markets including nature based attractions, recreational activities, cultural experiences and heritage products and places.

One of the emerging strengths of Wyndham in tourism product is its local and regional events. The City hosts a number of regionally significant events (eg. RAAF Museum Air Pageant, Legends on the Lawn at Werribee Park and the Melbourne International 3 Day Event at the National Equestrian Centre) targeted at the leisure market along with a growing business meetings and events sector. These events have been influential in the high percentage of day visitors who travel to the region.

Recent major capital investment in the Werribee Open Range Zoo has seen the inclusion of a Gorilla experience and with children now offered free entry on weekends, visitation numbers are expected to increase significantly.

The development of the Wyndham Harbour Marina on Port Phillip Bay will add a high level of extra visitation into the Werribee South area.

This is all good news for Wyndham City. The major experiences and events on offer will increase tourism visitation, yield and dispersal and as a consequence, grow the local economy, create new business opportunities and grow existing enterprises.

However for the tourism industry and local businesses across a range of sectors to maximise these opportunities a more efficient road network must be developed.

A full diamond interchange at the Princess Freeway and Duncans Road intersection is a priority. Investment in the interchange will not only ensure efficient access to the tourism precinct but it will also provide a much needed link to the Werribee City Centre and as a consequence have a positive effect on expenditure dispersal of visitors to the region.

Another action for priority is investment in tourist signage on the Princes Freeway and arterial roads leading to major destinations. Existing signage is both tired in look and lacking up to date information. This current situation is detrimental to the promotion of Wyndham as a major tourism destination.
Manufacturing & Export Capacity

The effect on manufacturing and the subsequent changes in the structure of the Australian and global economy has been well documented and Wyndham has not been immune from these changes.

It is noted that the share of full time employment in the city attributed to manufacturing dropped from 19.1% in 2006 to 16.4% in 2010. Whilst this may appear somewhat indicative of global trends it should be noted that much of this percentage shift in Wyndham can be attributed to a significant increase in the provision of jobs in the construction industry. (Table 5)

Table 5

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Source: INTERPEL Model

Motor vehicle parts, food processing and chemical manufacturing are still sectors of significance within the Laverton North/Truganina Industrial Precinct.
Council was a key partner in the development of a regional initiative, Melbourne’s West Export Network, an organisation established to promote export awareness and capability within the region.

The network was initially activated with a small amount of seed funding provided by the six western region Councils and in-kind support from Austrade, Department of Business and Innovation, (DBI) the Bendigo Bank and a small number of local companies.

Activities of the network include:

- Organising and facilitating networking events for the sharing of expertise and information on export opportunities
- Organising workshops to build the capacity to export and develop successful strategies for entry into international markets
- Arranging seminars and business cluster meetings with key industry experts from the export sector
- Facilitating meetings with visiting overseas business representatives interested in trade with Australian companies
- Facilitating activities designed to assist existing exporters to investigate new markets
- Regular communications, alerts and website updates on new government export initiatives and funding opportunities

Financial support of the network has also been previously sourced from the State Government’s Export Network Grants Program and it is recommended by Council that this program should continue to be funded.

Wyndham is also in the fortunate position of hosting an Austrade Export Development Officer. The officer works closely with Council and the Export Network in facilitating workshops and seminars.

Council applauds the decentralisation and growth of the business development function of the Department of Business and Innovation and most particularly the recent move to a new facility at Brooklyn. The change in focus of the department in providing greater resourcing for face to face contact and the provision of specialised services to business is also to be commended.

Most particularly DBI Business Development Officers with specialist export development knowledge together with officers from the Industry Capability Network will be a major resource in building company export capacity and addressing the issue of import replacement.

Council, through the Economic Development Unit looks forward to continuing the positive working relationship with the Victorian Business Centre in identifying opportunities for new and potential exporters as well as companies with existing overseas markets.
Education, Skills Development & Employment

Over the last ten years the labour base throughout the world has undergone dramatic change. This change has been driven by advances in communication, technology and automation systems and this is obviously the way of the future.

Wyndham City must provide opportunity for both the current and future workforce to meet the needs of the emerging economy. Companies seeking to invest and relocate are attracted by a number of key attributes a region has to offer. Whilst location, access to consumer markets and industry suppliers are important in the decision making process; access to an appropriately skilled and educated labour force is critical.

Wyndham City needs to build the skills of its residents to meet the needs of emerging knowledge based industries and businesses seeking to relocate or expand that require a high skilled professional workforce.

A report by the Centre for Strategic Economies at Victoria University showed that Wyndham City’s share of resident workers at management level and professionals and residents holding Bachelor Degree qualifications is significantly lower than the Melbourne average. These and other statistical data indicates that at present the education level of Wyndham residents is not positioned to meet the demands of the future economy. *(Tables 5 & 6)*

*Table 5*
Examination of these figures may indicate in the first instance a lack of accessibility to higher education and whilst this is a fact Council’s concerns are much deeper. The impact of early primary school education and secondary education ultimately guides the direction of learning outcomes and career pathways.

The uncertainty of funding for new schools beyond the current budget limits the certainty of the provision and quality of both primary and secondary education. Whilst the Department of Education plans for the provision of schools, they are unable to indicate with certainty which schools will be built in forthcoming years. This leads to overcrowding of schools, poor transition from primary school to secondary college and as a consequence greater potential for disengagement with higher education training.

For example, as previously articulated in Council’s submission to the Inquiry into Liveability Options in the Outer Suburbs, Baden Powell College P-9 in Tarneit currently has 1120 students enrolled in a school designed for 675. The school’s designated play area is now completely covered with portable classrooms and it is still unclear when the next Primary School in the area will be built to relieve this overcrowding.

The Tarneit North Senior Campus (Year 10-12) will not open until 2012, despite students completing Year 9 at Baden Powell College since 2009. This has resulted in Year 10 students not having a local senior school to attend in 2010 and 2011 and therefore pressure is placed on other schools to accommodate these students.

Wyndham City welcomes the recent investment in the establishment of the State Government funded select entry school, Suzanne Cory High School and the Federal Government funding of a trade training centre to be established on the grounds of Victoria University in Hoppers Crossing.
Quality and provision of education infrastructure in Wyndham is not meeting the demands of the growing population. This situation has both immediate and long term consequences.

In order to develop a skilled workforce the following conditions need to be met:

- Investment in education at all levels
- Access to trade training centres
- Further development of programs that support industry based training
- Investment in human resourcing to engage with industry and promote industry based training programs
- Access, both geographically and financially to higher education programs; including those offering degree courses in communication and technology, medical and health, business, economics and law (The Werribee Employment Precinct is an obvious choice for the location of Higher Education / Tertiary facilities)
Recommendations:

1. That State Government and Wyndham City work collaboratively to ensure that Council’s vision for the Werribee Employment Precinct and Werribee City Centre is achieved

2. That State Government formalises arrangements with relevant agencies to be the planning authority for the WEP

3. That State Government formalises arrangements with relevant agencies to be the development authority for the WEP

4. That State Government prioritises infrastructure funding for the development of the Werribee Employment Precinct

5. That an appropriate level of the proceeds from the sale of land inside the Werribee Employment Precinct be allocated to WEP infrastructure projects including those priority projects articulated in this submission

6. That State Government gives similar consideration to funding infrastructure projects for Werribee City to those afforded to other outer metropolitan activity centres

7. That State Government recognises the importance of ongoing investment in freight related infrastructure in the Laverton North / Truganina Industrial Precinct

8. That the final location for Western Freight Facility and associated freight line corridor be finalised as a matter of priority

9. That State Government continues to support Export Networks through the Export Network Grants Program

10. That State Government provides greater certainty in the construction of primary and secondary schools in new estates and that such construction is completed in a timely manner

11. That State Government supports the development of higher education/tertiary institutions in the WEP

12. That State Government recognises the capacity of Wyndham City’s tourism experiences to generate business growth and employment

13. That the Duncans Road / Princes Freeway intersection be developed into a full diamond interchange

14. That tourist signage on the Princess Freeway and relevant arterial roads be upgraded as a matter of priority