17 January 2012

Mrs Jan Kronberg MLC
Chair
Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Mrs Kronberg

GROWING THE SUBURBS: INFRASTRUCTURE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN OUTER SUBURBAN MELBOURNE

Thank you for your letter dated 2 December 2011 inviting submissions to your Inquiry.

Your inquiry is a critical one for the future of metropolitan Melbourne because we cannot continue with single-purpose dormitory suburbs where people are condemned to long and difficult travel to access employment and services. Retrofitting our outer suburbs to become well-rounded communities and places where people can live, work and play is important for the future sustainability of Melbourne.

Research undertaken by our officers in the report “Transforming Australian Cities”, http://5000plus.net.au/assets/d09525e72ff203d580978bf28ce80764ae262fb/transaustcities.pdf indicates the overall cost effectiveness of greater utilization of existing urban areas and public transport corridors. Whilst it is vital that inner Melbourne continues to grow as the principal centre of commerce and tertiary services in Victoria, we also support the further development of six Central Activities Districts distributed across the metropolitan area as centres of employment.

I note that you wrote to me in relation to the Business Partner Cities network so I will particularly refer to the aspect of your terms of reference that relates to sister city relationships.

Based on our experience international local government relationships can play an important role in introducing businesses to international markets, particularly at the grass roots level. It is important to note that many international local governments govern communities considerably larger than those in Australia so the value of the civic relationship is leveraged for our businesses through the market access provided by our counterparts overseas.

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Our local governments are relatively small, therefore it is important to consolidate our overseas activity. For this reason, the City of Melbourne conducts its international economic development activities with the intention that they can be utilised by Victorian businesses at large and in cooperation with Victorian and Australian diplomatic and trade agencies.

The City of Melbourne has 6 sister cities: Osaka (Japan), Tianjin (China), Thessaloniki (Greece), Boston (USA), St Petersburg (Russia) and Milan (Italy) and maintains an office in Tianjin. Based upon a previous strategic alliance with New Delhi around the Melbourne Commonwealth Games we also work through Industry Associations on relationships with New Delhi and Mumbai in India.

In 1999 the City of Melbourne and the Australian Industry Group (AIG) became joint members of the Business Partner Cities network (BPC). This was the first trade network of cities that Council committed to beyond the individual Sister City relationships. BPC was created by and is maintained by the City of Osaka in Japan. BPC has 14 members who are either city governments or city-based chambers of commerce within the Asia-Pacific region and its aim is to create opportunities for small to medium sized enterprises to establish links with their counterparts throughout the network.

BPC provides access to local businesses representatives in the member cities and through the joint membership with AIG, the network is open to all Victorian businesses, not just those based in Melbourne.

Council recently endorsed an International Engagement Framework to direct the City of Melbourne’s international relationships over the next few years.

The framework covers four main areas of priority:

- build prosperity
- facilitate learning
- support community, cultural and civic links
- participate in international governance.

To address Council’s objective to be an economically prosperous city the framework will focus particularly on international links with Osaka (Japan), Tianjin (China) and New Delhi (India).

By increasing exports and inwards investments in key industry sectors – including financial services, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, retail, education, tourism, environmental sustainability and professional knowledge services – the City of Melbourne will be supporting and enhancing the city’s specific strengths.

To facilitate learning the framework proposes that we increase exchanges between Melbourne and international partner cities in urban sustainability, city government and other areas of excellence.
Increasing awareness of, and making better use of, our international links will in turn support our local community, cultural and civic links. And through advocacy and representation of Melbourne’s interests at international forums we will actively participate in international governance.

It is important to note that the framework is integrated with our local business development activities and guided by business leaders from across key sectors of the city economy through the Enterprise Melbourne Board established by Council to guide five key areas:

- increasing business capability, expertise, innovation and entrepreneurship to make the city a desirable location for business and investment
- encouraging export and international connections – helping Melbourne businesses consider new markets and encourage inbound business and investment
- commissioning research and information that will help promote Melbourne as a business and investment location
- building Melbourne’s business community and creating collaboration opportunities between Melbourne businesses
- forming economic alliances between council and other levels of government and industry associations.

I refer you to our Enterprise Melbourne website (below) where you will find extensive information about our domestic and international programs, including a link to the BPC network in Osaka.


Yours sincerely

Robert Doyle
Lord Mayor