Dear Mr Koops,

Westgate General Practice Network:
Inquiry into Liveability Options in Outer Suburban Melbourne

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee’s (OSISD Committee) Inquiry into Liveability Options in Outer Suburban Melbourne.

Background - Westgate General Practice Network

Westgate General Practice Network has, over 18 years, worked in strong partnership with many organisations to service the complex needs of Hobsons Bay and Wyndham, and contributed to regional planning across the West of Victoria.

Outer (Western Suburban Melbourne)

The West faces many challenges. Growth over the next ten years will be concentrated in the outer Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the Western region. These LGAs will face the dual challenge of substantial growth and ageing populations over the next ten years. The ageing population in the West will result in increased pressure on aged care services. Given the particular characteristics of the West’s population, this will include higher demand for more complex aged care services as the impact of chronic disease in the middle years results in higher demand for health services in the older population.

The growth in the young families will also put pressure on birthing services, maternal and child health and paediatric services and the need for childcare.

Current service utilisation levels in the West do not reflect the high prevalence levels of several key health conditions. Utilisation rates have also failed to match the rapid population growth in West. This is likely due to a basic lack of service capacity in the region and residents choosing to access services outside the West.

The spread of health infrastructure is considerably lower in the West relative to other parts of Melbourne. Demand for health services in the West will continue to grow rapidly. Western Melbourne will be one of the country’s fastest growing regions over the next ten years. The nature of demand for health services will be complex and varied. Existing services are stretched and are struggling to keep up with the growing demand by a rapidly growing population.

Health planning in the West must acknowledge the social determinants of health. Significant
differences in socioeconomic status across LGAs in the West must also be taken into account. It is widely acknowledged that the economic and social conditions under which people live and work determine their health. For example, consistent evidence shows that unemployment is detrimental to health, and influences a range of health outcomes, including depression, other mental health-related problems and chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, and is associated with high levels of risk behaviours such as smoking (Dept. of Health (Vic.), 2008a).

Education

Education levels are another important determinant of health outcomes and socioeconomic status. There is clear evidence that education levels in the West are generally below state averages. The cultural and linguistic diversity of the West will pose ongoing challenges around the delivery of future health services in the region. There will be ongoing demand for translation and interpreter services and future services will need to account for culturally specific views about how and when to interact with the sector.

Both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas are being affected by our unsustainable populations and practices. Residents live in constant congestion and stress. Travel to work for many, consumes many hours in the day. Transport is poor.

Service Coordination

Innovative approaches to service coordination and service delivery are required to address some of these needs. Equally important is working in partnership with a range of providers and the ability to attract GPs and specialist providers into the area. WPGN is pleased to have introduced team based services to our disadvantaged groups through a range of partnerships including:

- Post and Perinatal Depression group and individual therapy through a partnership with Mercy Health Werribee;
- Men’s health;
- Assessment and counselling services for children with learning disabilities and their families through partnership with Victoria University;
- Psychiatry and Counselling services;
- Dietary services;
- Prevention programs;
- Diabetes services;
- Exercise Physiology;
- Social Work services;
- Community Mental Health Nursing Services;
- After hour services - currently in its early phase of establishment; and
• Health & Wellbeing / Health Literacy.

All service providers have been engaged from outside of our catchment, staying committed to the policy of WGPN to significantly enhance workforce capacity in our region.

Workforce development

In addition to the allied health service managed by WGPN, we have supported the new graduates to the University of Notre Dame through clinical placements in practices and at our Allied Health Service. Clinical placements of nursing students in general practice continues through out partnership with Victoria University. We have continued to support new GPs with the establishment of practices ensuring that RACGP standards are met and PIP registration is obtained. This has also included support with recruitment of administration and nursing staff.

Based on our understanding of our local population growth and demographic complexity, programs and services need to be better developed and connected to manage the demands on our health services.

Context Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry and Medicare Local Model Population Health Plan

The aim of the WGPN Lead Medicare Local is to achieve positive outcomes for the population in the Outer Western Region of Suburban Melbourne by working with the community to improve health and wellbeing. This will be a significant step in the creation of a better integrated and coordinated, patient focused, health system. Of particular interest in the Population Health Plan is the introduction of 1950 new medical and nursing professionals to support After Hours Services in Melbourne’s West.

Partner Agencies

The 89 partner agencies include local government, local hospital networks, community health centres, primary and early development organisations, universities, workforce agencies and Victorian State government regional offices.

Social Model of Health

In the submission to the Commonwealth, the WGPN as the lead agency together with 89 partner agencies developed a Medicare Local Population Health Service Plan. The purpose of the Medicare Local Population Health Service Plan is to promote the maximum wellbeing of all people living in Outer Western Region of Melbourne. The Medicare Local Population Health Service Plan is based on an understanding that health is not just about the absence of disease or illness, but that social factors such as belonging to a community, participation in community life, healthy environments, employment and housing are key factors in people’s health and wellbeing.

The Medicare Local Population Health Service Plan incorporates:

1. Review of recent state planning policies as they relate to both private housing and social determinants of health;

2. Detailed examination and forecasts of population growth trends and impacts across two major growth corridors of Outer Metropolitan Melbourne. These include:
   a. Hobson’s Bay and Wyndham City Councils; and
b. Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Melton City Council regions.

3. Epidemiological reviews of primary health services, proposed Central Activity Districts and support services in this major growth corridor(s).

4. Classification of urban renewal practices and links population planning indicators such as existing Victorian State Government Planning Policies to clinical and population health indicators; and

5. a series of recommendations that span a 10 year planning period to address the above.

Find attached to this correspondence our submission to the *Inquiry into Liveability Options in Outer Suburban Melbourne*

Regards

[Signature]

Corinne Siebel
Chief Executive Officer