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Mr Sean Coley, Executive Officer
Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Parliament House, Spring Street
East Melbourne, VIC 3002
Email: osisdc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Coley,

Re: 'Inquiry into impact of the State Government's decision to change the Urban Growth Boundary'

The Heart Foundation is pleased to contribute to the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee's inquiry into recently announced changes to Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB).

The Heart Foundation has been an independent charity for 50 years and our vision is for Australians to have the best cardiovascular health in the world. The Heart Foundation's mission is to reduce suffering and death from heart, stroke and blood vessel disease in Australia. We achieve this by funding world-class research, supporting health professionals, and promoting health in the community.

Rather than address each of the Terms of Reference, our submission briefly reiterates a number of points we made in a recent submission¹ to the Growth Areas Authority, when the Authority called for public comment on changes to the UGB. (Our submission to the Growth Areas Authority is attached with this letter.) In doing so, our submission responds to Terms of Reference (f): 'any alternative options, including any used in other jurisdictions'.

The Heart Foundation's interest in changes to Melbourne's UGB stems from a strong body of evidence that shows the link between urban form and health and the many negative health effects associated with urban sprawl. People who live in sprawling suburbs are more likely to be physically inactive, be overweight and obese, have less access to public transport, be socially isolated, and experience higher rates of blood pressure. Many of these are risk factors for chronic disease, including cardiovascular disease.

¹ Heart Foundation, *Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities: Submission to the Growth Areas Authority*, Melbourne, 2009.

The importance of planning for health, and practical steps to achieve this, are described in the Heart Foundation's *Healthy by Design: a planner's guide to environments for active living*.² Healthy by Design is used by local governments to embed healthy urban planning principles into Council policy and practice. It guides planners to consider the health impacts of their work and outlines seven key design considerations – walking and cycling routes; streets; local destinations; open space; public transport; seating, signage, lighting, fencing and walls; and fostering community spirit – for the development of urban environments that support communities to lead active and healthy lives.

The Heart Foundation believes urban planning should give due recognition to the link between urban form and health and that planning decisions should be based on the key principles established in *Melbourne 2030*.

The Heart Foundation also believes that the Victorian Government should establish a Melbourne Planning Authority to coordinate planning for all of Melbourne. Such an authority should:

- Coordinate planning for all of Melbourne, rather than its growth areas. This would alleviate the risk that an authority with responsibility for growth areas, becomes an advocate for urban sprawl, rather than sustainable growth.
- Plan to support sustainable development, featuring urban consolidation and medium density housing provision and growth along current public transport corridors.
- Plan for the health and residential needs of an ageing population.
- Base planning decisions on health considerations – the Heart Foundation's *Healthy by Design* is a practical guide to achieve this.
- Protect valuable farming or forestry land from urban development through the identification of 'rural reserves' or similar means.
- Seek to increase the density of housing in growth areas, requiring at least 25 dwellings per hectare in new greenfield developments. Targets should also be established for increased residential density through urban consolidation in locations around major transport routes.

Thankyou for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry into changes to Melbourne's urban growth boundary. Should you require clarification about any points raised in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Greg Ford, Senior Policy Advisor, on (03) 9090 2026 or by email to greg.ford@heartfoundation.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



Kathy Bell
Chief Executive Officer – Victoria

Attachment: 'Delivering Melbourne's Newest Sustainable Communities: Submission to the Growth Areas Authority', June 2009.

² Heart Foundation, *Healthy by Design: a planners' guide to environments for active living*, Heart Foundation, Melbourne, 2004.