

Why UGB expansion plans are seriously flawed: analysis by Jenni Bundy

The Melbourne @ 5 Million documents and consequent plan to expand the UGB to provide further green-field residential land from Green Wedges, announced in December 2009, are based on incorrect and deeply flawed land supply estimates. These invalid figures are the basis upon which the Government has deemed it necessary to move the UGB.

The figures require amendment and other relevant planning and particularly, economic factors require re-examination

The following analysis demonstrates some of the mistakes incorporated into the plan for proposed outward movement of the UGB.

We seek State Government's timely decision and announcement that the proposed review of the UGB is cancelled for the present time, and that no further review will be examined internally for at least 5 years, as recommended last year by the Government's Melbourne 2030 Audit report.

There are many valid reasons for such a course. It is both possible and timely for a graceful retraction to occur. To continue with this plan threatens and compromises the integrity of Melbourne's future planning

1, Invalid land supply figures

Sources: UDP 2007 Report – Broad-hectare Residential Land (*small East Region yield omitted.*)

Source. DPCD Urban & Regional Development Summary

Region	Estimated Land Take Up by Development Industry #				Total Ha*	Lot Yield*	Overall Yield Lots per Ha
	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11 years+			
West*	818.84	1205.04	2094.15	2959.06	7077.09	70601	9.98
North*	551.35	1059.52	1705.31	1259.28	4575.46	47949	10.48
South*	794.94	1383.4	2362.45	2281.36	6822.15	68322	10.01
					18474.70	186872	10.12

Yield in Lots

West*	10055	13396	19620	27530
North	6541	11456	18309	11643
South	9259	14519	23735	20809

The error is that as estimated in consultation with the development industry, the full lot yield analysis in the UDP 2007 Report shows clearly that Growth Areas on the whole indicate a MARKEDLY REDUCED lot yield per hectare over time. For example, Hume Council shows a yield estimate of only 9.60 lots per hectare in the 6-10 year timeframe and reduces further to 8.07 lots per hectare for land in the 11 year+, 2019+ timeframe. Mellon, Wyndham and Casey likewise reduce yield as time extends.

The firm indication of 15 dwellings per hectare must be incorporated into the calculations of broadhectare yield. In the absence of this, the premise on which the "land shortage" has been identified is false. The figures must be recalculated to yield a minimum 15 dwellings per (gross) hectare, say from 2010: a most achievable figure. A minimum of 15 is essential with a target of 20 dwellings per hectare desirable. Over each gross 1000 hectares, an overall average of 17.5 would be quite feasible.

2. Re-calculation of lot yields from land currently available inside the UGB, from 2010 onwards (removing the 1-2 years' figures as these are 2008/2009) demonstrates:-

Region	Total Ha 3-11 years	Yield 3-11+ As per UDP report	Lot Yield @ 15 per Ha	Additional lots vs UDP report	Lot Yield @ 20 per Ha	Addition Lots vs. UDP report
West	6258.25	60546	93874	33328	125165	64619
North	4024.11	41408	60362	18954	80482	39074
South	6027.21	59063	90408	31345	120544	61481
	16309.57	161017 (9.87 per Ha)	244644	83627	326191	165174

3. Lot take up, based on recent trends, assuming that trend continues with no abatement, is approximately 13,000 lots per annum to accommodate Melbourne's average annual predicted population increase. A lot yield of over 240,000 dwellings based on 15 dwellings per hectare is sufficient for nearly 19 years at recent growth levels. A lot yield of over 325,000 dwellings based on 20 dwellings per hectare would be sufficient for 25 years

4. Melbourne @ 5 million assumed constant high migration and constant growth as key economic indicators. The writing was already on the wall when the report was released in December 2008. The economic growth structure upon which major countries have relied for the last two decades is no longer viable. A more modest, sustained stability (rather than exponential growth) is very likely to occur for the next decade or more, given the situation which is by now obvious to everyone. This will affect migration.

5. Melbourne @ 5 million basically creates and invests employment districts to produce jobs. The jobs will attract migrants. The migrants have to be housed. We believe this formula has proved already to be unsustainable. It was a self-perpetuating circle that has now been forcibly broken,

6. Melbourne @ 5 million seems to have abandoned the principles of Melbourne 2030, despite declaring those core principles more valid than ever. Melbourne @ 5 million has determined that because people WANT a house in green-field land, that land must necessarily be provided in continuing perpetuity

The proportion of new housing mooted to go into green-field land rather than into urban renewal is an indication of the woeful failure to implement Melbourne 2030 thus far.

7. The land areas for investigation show a minimum land area "required". The minimum area required is sufficient for about ~5,000 homes at a yield of 15 per gross hectare. This is greatly in excess of the estimated shortfall in dwellings based on a high population

8. There are further numerical discrepancies in the documentation released to the public that call its validity even further into question.

9. The Melbourne 2030 Audit Committee found that no revision of the UGB was needed in the next five years,

10. The corridor land envisaged for eventual development by the Greater Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme and the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works in 1971 did NOT envisage certain land ever being used for residential purposes yet some of this is now included in the current UGB investigation areas.

11. We note that the MMBW in 1971 quoted Melbourne's expected population in line with the planning strategy. The official forecast at the time for the Melbourne statistical division, including the Mornington Peninsula, was:-

1985	3.3 million minimum to 3.5 million maximum
2000	4.5 million minimum to 4.7 million maximum

This demonstrates amply that predicting population 15 and 30 years ahead is not really possible other than in the broadest terms

12. Population prediction has many incalculable features The "Victoria In 2008" documents contain cautions about the figures and the assumptions on which they are presently based.

13 To take population projections that very likely are considerably overestimated, then match them with the development Industry's estimates of land take up based on reducing lot yield over time, to produce statements that Melbourne will run out of land If we don't expand the UGB well beyond where It was Intended to ultimately finish, is preposterous.

We cannot throw away Melbourne's future based on these shonky figures. Melbourne's UGB boundary must remain set for all time, at least outside the growth corridors and at least until 2030 for its entire length. Future growth of the city must occur inside those limits just as it does around the world in cities where more land is not an option.

Jenni Bundy died in the Black Saturday fire on 7 February at St Andrews.