

Sustainable Population Australia (Victorian branch)

Submission to Victorian State Government Legislative Council Outer Suburban/ Interface Services and Development Select Committee Inquiry into the impact of State Governments' decision to extend the Urban Growth Boundary.

“Terms of reference:

the Committee has been asked to investigate the State Government's decision to change the Urban Growth Boundary, and in particular:

The impact of the State Government's decision to change the urban growth boundary on landholders and the environment and plans announced by the Government to introduce an increased development contribution for land in designated growth areas, including —

- (a) the likely quantum of the collections by Government;
- (b) mechanisms to ensure the contributions are directed only to the intended purposes;
- (c) the likely impact on the housing and development industries;
- (d) any unintended consequences including the impact on all landholders and purchasers to be impacted;
- (e) any displacement or replacement of Government spending likely to result from the increased collections; and
- (f) any alternative options, including any used in other jurisdictions;”

Overview

Sustainable Population Australia Victorian branch approaches the issue of the impact of the State Governments decision to change the urban growth boundary from the point of view of Melbourne's present and future population needs, environmental impact of that population and the ultimate sustainability of the conurbation of Melbourne and its inhabitants.

Considerations:

Proposal of Extension of Urban Growth boundaries is predicated on projected future population growth. The necessity for and inevitability of the expected levels of growth must be questioned.

Extension of the U.G.B. is not being proposed as an alternative to further urban densifications of the established part of Melbourne but in *addition* to this which places stresses in both directions.

The greater part of the present and projected population growth which Melbourne is experiencing is discretionary. The State government presently and continually advertises for more people to come to live in Victoria via the website at <http://www.liveinvictoria.vic.gov.au/>

It is clear from previous attempts to reduce it that “urban sprawl” is generally seen to be undesirable. Melbourne 2030 was supposed to reduce urban sprawl- to “*guide the sustainable development of metropolitan Melbourne and the surrounding region and enhance Melbourne's livability now and into the future*” (terms of reference to Melbourne 2030 1st 5 years audit)

– We conclude that the government sees a need to control the outward growth of Melbourne.

The present proposal to extend the urban growth boundary flies in the face of all expressed intentions to preserve the Green Wedges and public open space and is predicated on projected and present high levels of population growth.

At the time of writing the author of this submission has the ***Introduction to the State Of the Environment report 2008*** at hand. In this document the issues of human activities, population growth and environmental decline are woven together to the extent that any part of this document, randomly selected will refer to an aspect of this effect.

e.g. p 34 “*ongoing clearing and conversion to cropping is still the major pressure for native grasslands and Victoria’s native grasslands retain less than 1% of their original extent in good condition.*”

What will the extension of the urban growth boundary do to grasslands?

See below excerpt from Green Wedges Coalition Media release 16th June 2009 re proposed extension of UGB

The plans will expand the Urban Growth Boundary around new growth areas and a freeway reservation which include:

- *6,900 ha of the State’s best remaining western basalt plains grassland, whose biodiversity rivals Kakadu*
- *924 ha of grassy woodlands in the Darebin, Jackson & Merri Creek valleys, with 400 year-old red gums*
- *prime market garden land in the Westernport Catchment;*
- *Southern Brown Bandicoot habitat near the Cranbourne Royal Botanic Gardens*
- *The historic township of Wollert, to be razed for another freeway, parallel to the Craigieburn,*
- *An estimated 200 homes and family farms, blighting the future of hard-working farming families*

Recently the news is that even the area of grasslands that was to remain under the present proposal will be further eroded because the proposed route of a new road has been altered in response to lobbying from a developer!

Development covering grasslands to the north and North West of the city would be a heavy environmental loss.

...again from State of the Environment report 2008

P 4. Introduction Population growth, settlement and consumer patterns and climate change are the key drivers of environmental degradation in Victoria.

We know that the outward suburban spread of Melbourne is an environmental negative. It cannot be otherwise.

Sustainable Population Australia Victorian branch would ask the panel to bear in mind the environmental cost of extending Melbourne's UGB. If the extension to the UGB is given a tick it will accommodate and give license to future population growth that we actually do not have to have!

Approval of this concept would seal our fate as a megalopolis- whose nature will be shaped by continuing population pressure and may even end up being densely populated at the edges with little private open space. This will further reduce the loss of space for any other species that lose out each time the bulldozers come in to moonscape in readiness for new suburbs.

We would ask the panel to consider that unless the rate of population growth is questioned, then this situation will arise again within a decade with further losses of the natural surrounds of Melbourne and no end to this process. Australia is one of the highest per capita greenhouse gas emitters in the world and Victoria has the largest CO2 emissions in Australia which the Victorian government says is because of the high rate of population growth. (Green paper on climate change) factor to climate change.) This is another excellent reason to curb population growth.

Apart from current high immigration Melbourne's population would continue grow through natural increase but at a much slower pace " ...Overseas migration is the main contributor to Melbourne's growth," (Victorian in Future fact sheet) The growth from natural increase although also booming is manageable and would not itself raise the question of extension of the urban growth boundary at this time. In addition, this growth will eventually stabilize- probably around mid century.

The problems with which we are faced because of projected but avoidable high levels of population growth are largely of our own making – that is the making of current governments which in fact have the choice of slowing significantly the level of growth but instead choose to encourage it and accelerate it.

It is undeniable that we are moving in the wrong direction and that more of what we are doing now – by added population will further degrade our environment

The decision of the select committee will be crucial for Melbourne's future and we hope that a decision is made to continue protection of the Green Wedges as open space as

originally intended and redefined in the Melbourne 2030 plan. Please refer to submission from Green Wedges Coalition for comprehensive more details on specific natural areas

The Victorian Government should totally revise its modis operandi with regard to its own part in population growth in Victoria and work towards a sustainable future with first a stable future population and then inevitable a smaller one after mid century. This kind of foresight is needed if we are to have a future and not ecological collapse.



Jill Quirk- President: Sustainable Population Australia (Victorian branch)
P.O. Box 1173
Frankston 3199
12.10.09

jillq@optusnet.com.au
0409742927