

Andrew Booth
6/26 Collier Crescent
West Brunswick 3056
Tel: 9381 0182

Sean Coley
Executive Officer
Outer Suburban / Interface Services Development Committee
Parliament House, Spring St
East Melbourne VIC 3002

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Dear Mr Coley

Inquiry into the impact of decision to change the Urban Growth Boundary

As a committed conservationist, and long-standing volunteer with Environment Victoria and other environment groups I am very concerned about the impacts of the proposed UGB expansion, both in terms of biodiversity and unsustainable urban sprawl.

We have around the edge of Melbourne a concentration of nationally endangered Volcanic Plains Grassland and Grassy Woodland, which provides habitat for a suite of rare and threatened species. The proposed UGB expansion will result in large scale clearing, especially of the grassland, and Melbourne's natural environment and liveability will be much worse off. The proposed UGB expansion and Outer Ring freeway will accelerate unsustainable, car-dependent urban sprawl and substantially increase greenhouse emissions.

These impacts are avoidable – even given Melbourne's current high rate of growth. Through modest increases in lot density in existing growth corridors up to 15 – 20 lots / ha (gross) residential land supply can be increased to 20 years or more. Infill and higher density development along major public transport routes could accommodate an additional 2 million people using existing commercial delivery models¹. There is certainly no need to expand the urban growth boundary for at least another 5 years as recommended by the Melbourne 2030 audit.

To address biodiversity impacts should UGB expansion be approved, it is essential that State Government, including the Growth Areas Authority, DPCD and DSE, commit to the following, with the necessary funding, prior to UGB ratification:

- Accurate, high resolution native vegetation quality mapping and targeted threatened species surveys this spring –early summer across the urban investigation areas;
- Assessment of the significance of site-specific remnant vegetation and habitat for conserving EPBC listed and state significant communities and species,

¹ Report commissioned by City of Melbourne and Dept of Transport.

- Delineation of a strategic conservation network as part of the Growth Area Framework Plans which protects sites of regional and higher ecological significance, with effective habitat links and buffers;
- Implementation measures and adequate funding to ensure that identified high conservation value sites, both within the growth areas and adjacent green wedge, including the proposed grassland and grassy woodland reserves², are secured and managed for conservation purposes;
- Increase in area ratio of offsets versus area cleared to at least 4: 1, in accordance with the intent and current practice of the Native Vegetation Management Framework.

I would appreciate the opportunity to present my concerns to the Committee and the public hearings. Also I have drafted a critique of State Government's Strategic Impact Assessment of the UGB expansion under the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. I will finalise and forward a copy this week.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Booth

² As discussed in the revised Strategic Assessment Report