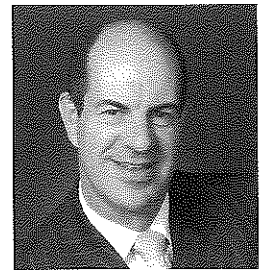
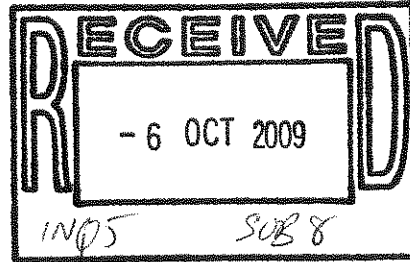




Kelvin Thomson MP
Labor Member for Wills



Monday 5th October 2009/ac



The Hon George Seitz MP
The Chairperson
Outer Suburban, Interface Services
and Development Committee
MLA Keilor
Parliament of Victoria
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Mr Seitz,

I am writing to provide to the Outer Suburban, Interface Services and Development Committee a copy of the submission I made to the Melbourne @ 5 Million Review that is currently being undertaken by the Victorian Government. I would appreciate if your committee could consider my submission, the issues it raises and its recommendations, in the context of your inquiry into the proposed Urban Growth Boundary expansion.

Melbourne is at a fork in the road. For a long time our city, its way of life and the opportunities it offers to all who come here have been the envy of cities around the world. To maintain this desirable situation we must act decisively to address the issues that threaten Melbourne with becoming another crowded, over populated, congested and polluted metropolis. Our city has reached the point where we need to change direction or risk our social and environmental future.

Melbourne is one of the world's most liveable cities. This year it was ranked third out of 140 cities as being the most liveable city. Our lifestyle, employment opportunities, health system, education system, infrastructure and environment are all aspects of a community that is the envy of many around the world .

Melbourne is now the fastest growing city in Australia, with thousands flocking to live here on a never before seen scale. Melbourne's population is growing on a scale not seen in Australia before, swelling by almost 150,000 people in two years. The 2001 Census recorded Melbourne's population at 3.3 million people. In 2006 our population reached 3.6 million. It has continued to grow faster than that of any other city in the country.

Melbourne's population grew by 74,713 in the year to last June and by 74,791 during the previous year. Melbourne's population is growing by more than 200 people a day, or almost 1500 per week. Melbourne's population growth last year far outpaced all other major Australian cities. Sydney grew by 55,047 (1.35%), Brisbane by 43,404 (2.3%) and Perth by 43,381 (2.8%).

Our city is forecast to have 4 million people living in it by the end of this year, with annual population growth rates reaching 2%. The outer fringe of Melbourne is currently taking 61% of our population growth. This is placing pressure on the existing Urban Growth Boundary and as a result, the Victorian Government announced it would seek to expand it.

The *Melbourne @ 5 million Review* is investigating the expansion of the outer Melbourne Urban Growth Boundary to accommodate some of the 284,000 new dwellings expected to be built in the growth areas. I have made a submission to this review calling on the Victorian Government to hold the line on Urban Sprawl and to protect our city's liveability.

Extending the Urban Growth Boundary will undermine our city's natural environment and liveability. It will totally contradict the original *Melbourne 2030* plan by proposing new sprawling suburbs across land that was originally earmarked to be Green Wedge land. Endangered ecosystems and biodiversity conservation will be placed under further pressure, with new suburbs more than likely to be heavily car dependent and isolated from jobs and services.

Areas being considered for inclusion within the growth areas have been designated as 'investigation areas'. The areas being investigated include areas in Melbourne's west, north and south east.

Around the urban fringe in these 'investigation areas', we have a concentration of some of the most endangered ecosystems in Australia, including Western Basalt Plains Grassland and Grassy Woodland, and a diverse range of other vegetation types and threatened species. It is vital we do everything we can to protect these ecologically sensitive and important areas from being overrun by development. Such development will also have serious implications for our ability to reduce our carbon footprint as a community.

Climate change is the single biggest economic and social issue of our time. Policy makers on every single front must be working towards reducing carbon emissions to secure our long term prosperity, health and wellbeing. The expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary is utterly inconsistent with tackling climate change.

Encouraging urban sprawl and ever increasing high density developments will lead to a more polluted, congested and unsustainable Melbourne. Bringing millions of people in to Melbourne will increase the stress on water supplies that are already strained, increase reliance on fossil fuels by communities that are on our urban fringe, and it will increase Melbourne's carbon footprint when we must be reducing it.

Regrettably the planning process in Melbourne is not being used to achieve environmental sustainability. Melbourne is generating more greenhouse emissions, using more water, losing open space and turning into a high rise steel and concrete jungle. Planners and policy makers talk the talk of protecting Melbourne's environment, but their actions have the opposite effect. They behave as Gough Whitlam once described rowers- facing in one direction but heading in the opposite one.

We need an environmentally sustainable development planning policy for Melbourne. We do not need more intense development or more sops to local residents. We do not need attacks on residential amenity through further loss of open space, high rise buildings which are turning Melbourne into Shanghai or Mexico City, ever larger dwellings such as the energy guzzling McMansions or policies which encourage reduced numbers of people per dwelling.

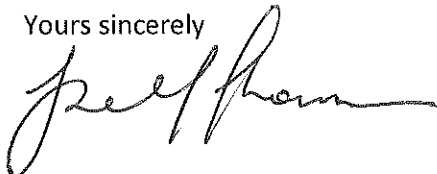
Local communities live with bad planning decisions for a lifetime and it is important that local amenity issues are considered before we continue to concrete the Green Wedges at the expense of open space that allows us to live and breathe.

We get told that population growth is inevitable and that it is desirable. Population growth has traditionally come at the expense of open space. Future public policy must take into consideration the threat which population growth poses to our existing public open spaces. Managing population growth so that it does not threaten the liveability of our city ought to be a priority of Governments.

Everything that makes our city the great place to live, work and raise a family, is potentially under threat if population growth and urban sprawl continue at the current rate. We must implement a strategy to stabilise population growth, urban expansion and development. Our way of life, open spaces and infrastructure cannot be sacrificed on the altar of ever expanding population. We have a responsibility to secure our city's future through thorough, thoughtful and detailed planning. This planning should not include an expanding Melbourne waistline.

It would be appreciated if you could please take my views into your consideration of this important matter and advise the Victorian Government not to proceed with its Urban Growth Boundary plans.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kelvin Thomson', written in a cursive style.

KELVIN THOMSON MP
Federal Labor Member for Wills

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