

# CORRECTED VERSION

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

### REFERENCES COMMITTEE

#### **Inquiry into environmental design and public health**

Melbourne— 31 August 2011

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Mrs J. Kronberg

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Secretary: Mr K. Delaney

#### Witnesses

Mr D. Hodge, acting deputy secretary, planning and local government, and

Mr J. Ginivan, acting executive director, planning policy and reform, Department of Planning and Community Development.

**The CHAIR** — Welcome, and thank you for making the time available to be with us this evening. This hearing is covered by parliamentary privilege; however, if you make comments outside this hearing, they are not necessarily covered by parliamentary privilege. You will receive a transcript in a week to 10 days which we ask you to check and then liaise with Keir Delaney from the committee secretariat. To start the proceedings, would you please state your full name and title, the organisation you are representing, and its address.

**Mr HODGE** — My name is David Hodge, acting deputy secretary, planning and local government, Department of Planning and Community Development, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne.

**Mr GINIVAN** — John Ginivan, acting executive director, planning policy and reform, Department of Planning and Community Development, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne.

**Mr HODGE** — Before we start to take minutes, I know everyone had a late night last night, so we can be as quick or take as long as you like. I am not proposing to keep you here for a long time, and I will lead you through the PowerPoint. Is that your expectation? I do not want to keep you here unnecessarily.

**The CHAIR** — That is not a problem. We are going to be here late anyway. It is more about whether you could be quite succinct with your presentation to allow maximum time for us to ask you some questions and get the conversation flowing.

**Mr HODGE** — That would be much more preferable for us, if we can do it that way. What we will do is John and I will take you through the PowerPoint as fast as we can; I generally do not like PowerPoint, because I think people just read out from them, and we can engage in conversation then about where things are at. Is that your expectation?

**The CHAIR** — Yes, great.

**Mr GINIVAN** — It is probably worth advising the committee of what we have just handed out to you as well, which is the covering letter from the secretary of the department, Yehudi Blacher; a submission, which is the first of the documents that you have received on the table — —

**The CHAIR** — Is this what we got this afternoon?

**Mr GINIVAN** — Yes, and we have just given you copies of the same thing, which has four attachments to it which are case examples of particular things that are referenced in the submission.

**The CHAIR** — That is good. The photocopies did not come out so well in terms of the case studies, so I appreciate that. Also, we received that this afternoon, and given all the other things that you know have happened, we might need to call you back if something comes up that we have not been able to cover because we have not been able to research it as much as we would have liked.

### **Overheads shown.**

**Mr HODGE** — That would be a pleasure, and I think that might be easier anyway. We could prepare on specific issues that you want to follow up on.

I will go through this reasonably quickly and then use it as a prompt to engage further. With respect to DPCD's functions, as you know, the legislation is the Aboriginal Heritage Act, the Building Act, the Local Government Act, the Regional Development Victoria Act, and the Planning and Environment Act. We have sport and recreation, regional development, heritage protection, urban design, planning and environment assessment and building standards — that is, housing and affordability.

I guess planning and environment has specific objectives to it. They are very general, as you can see there. I will not read them out to you, but they do relate to wellbeing, health, safety and environmental triple-bottom-line outcomes.

As you know, the Planning and Environment Act 1987 is more than 20 years old, and there has been a fair bit of legal precedent around those specific issues. There is work being done to review it.

I guess the other objectives in planning are as you can see on the screen. As I said, they relate to social, economic and environmental outcomes and also the components of the architectural and aesthetic. I guess the things that are untested are probably the purpose of this committee, in terms of the environmental design and public health and where that goes. The links are there, but in my opinion they are somewhat tenuous.

In relation to planning and the interventions, as you will know, the fundamentals around the planning system are about zonings and settlement planning and the overlays that go with that. That is becoming more and more complex. Planners love to plan, and they love to deliver these overlays. I think again the reviews of zones and planning schemes are looking at the way these controls, I guess, interact with communities and also stifle some of the outcomes we are looking for other than spatial outcomes. Micro-economic reform is one of them. Economic reform relates to it and also such simple health, development and wellbeing outcomes that go through that.

The spatial layouts that we talk about, most importantly, are obviously the controversial ones that you would all be aware of, relating in particular to buffers and what we as planners like to talk about as interface issues, where you have the buffers in the interface. So we are continually coming up against the issues around things. The obvious ones are the major pieces of infrastructure that we have: roads, freeways, refineries and other pieces of infrastructure and the buffers that are contained or not expected to be contained in them.

Some of those uses provide their own buffers. The sorts of issues that relate to that would be poultry farms. There are very stringent codes about them. They need to be 700 metres away from a dwelling, whereas an oil refinery in Yarraville is pretty much there from history. We are faced with it cheek by jowl. I do not know the distances, but you will all have a mental picture of what Yarraville looks like, with the refineries.

**Ms HARTLAND** — About 20 metres.

**Mr HODGE** — Is it your local electorate?

**Ms HARTLAND** — Yes, that is right.

**Mr HODGE** — You would know. You can tell me. So you know those interface issues that we have going with those sorts of things and the risks associated with those things.

The other issues are that we also set the standards in the planning system. I can attest to this through personal experience. In relation to the codes within the planning system, the one in particular that is probably the most relied on would be ResCode. ResCode has some very simple standards that are tried and proven and work very well for the types of developments that are expected. I think some people are a little patronising in many ways. They would say a standard urban unit development, probably in East Bentleigh or somewhere like that, but the truth of the matter is that in form and function they work very well.

The codes require north-facing open space, they require a certain level of open space and they require the function of those developments to work in a particular way. That is heavily regulated. What you find is that the garage works well, the storage works well, the bin storage works well — all those things. I believe that they relate to the health and wellbeing of the occupants, and also they just provide a greater standard of living in that they cut down on energy, and energy costs are minimised. Now we have the minimum energy standards and things that go with those things.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — Why did you say you believe that they have a positive health outcome?

**Mr HODGE** — I think they have a positive health outcome because of the ventilation.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — But do we know that or is this — —

**Mr HODGE** — This is the purpose of the committee, is it not, the measurements and outcome? I cannot point you to any studies that indicate that they provide better health outcomes. I think you can certainly point to running costs and efficiencies, and the perspective is that we have greater light and better ventilation, so clearly they are a better standard of development, as opposed to a Victorian terrace on a 6-metre block with the wrong orientation.

**Mr GINIVAN** — As we work through the submission you will see we have put a number of examples in here. To the extent that we have been able to measure performance outcomes, we point to those.

**Mr HODGE** — I am sorry; I do not have the great answer to that.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — It is okay. I just wanted to clear that up as we went through it.

**Mr HODGE** — I think that is right, and thank you for picking me up on that. That is the purpose of the committee, so I understand that.

Then there are also standards that are associated with ResCode that relate to walkability and location to public transport on the principal public transport networks. You have heard all these things before, but they are key, and they are everyday bread-and-butter measures that are implemented through the planning system that contribute to the health and wellbeing of occupants.

Within the portfolio we have a number of other programs that not only relate to regulatory outcomes; we have the outcomes that relate to urban design and urban renewal projects. We also run programs such as the Expert Assistance program and the Creating Better Places program. They are programs that offer funding outcomes principally for local government, for urban renewal and design-based outcomes in communities. Many of those sorts of projects are relating specifically to not only improving urban amenity but improving design function and outcomes.

One of the most important things that we do — and I need to say I do not think we do it enough — is the idea of community safety. By that I mean safety around activity centres and places where people live and travel. I think our urban design outcomes and local government understand the issues around safety and audits, such as being able to do an assessment of areas looking for safe lighting and safe access where people feel safe to walk and to congregate at night. There is a great deal of opportunity there in local government, in particular, and in the urban design outcomes that we aspire to, to improve community safety.

Any good designer will tell you that form follows function, so if we want a safe, functioning environment, we need to deliver a form that delivers that. You notice that there has been great criticism of late in some areas of Melbourne in particular. We would say Victoria Street, I suppose, through Richmond. The answer to that is not necessarily a law enforcement one; it is also a design-led response. In Footscray we have had similar outcomes in terms of trying to deliver a design-led response to improving community safety and function in those areas.

**The CHAIR** — Is another example Moorabool Street in Geelong, with the new bus interchange?

**Mr HODGE** — Exactly like that. It is a little bit frustrating when you see many transport interchanges that do not function properly for the want of more investment or a little bit of thought. There is one near me, and I drive past it every morning. I say, 'I wish they would cut those trees down. I wish they would get rid of those Salvation Army bins and pave it'. If I was paying for it, it would probably be \$10 000 worth of work, and if the council is paying for it, it would probably be \$25 000 worth of work, to improve the function of that centre, but given that VicTrack owns it, it is managed by Metro and it is a transport interchange which local government has a strong interest in, I feel there is a lack of coordination and understanding of how that works. We try to get that right through our urban design program, and our urban designers understand that. They cannot be everywhere and all things to all people. As John pointed out to me coming over, the cost-benefit ratio is there. It is 3 to 1, which is fantastic by anyone's standard.

**Mr GINIVAN** — Perhaps the more important part of that is that of that program there have been about 110 sites, I think, where intervention has occurred and investment has occurred, and of that the overwhelming response from stakeholders in the post-project monitoring has demonstrated a perceived improvement in amenity, safety and all those sorts of things. In terms of the focus of this submission, which was trying to respond to your terms of reference — is there evidence that urban design and planning make a difference to health and safety and public wellbeing? — our sense is that that is a program where we have seen a demonstrable response from the affected stakeholders in terms of their perception and real-life experience.

**Ms HARTLAND** — Could you name maybe four or five of those as examples?

**Mr HODGE** — I think Doncaster Hill is probably the poster one. That is quite effective — they have spent a fair bit of money there — and I think Footscray, again. Dandenong has been really successful. What else have we done? Oakleigh — there has been some investment there. I think through Glen Eira there has been a little — I cannot remember where that was. In Bentleigh, Ormond —

**Mr GINIVAN** — Greensborough.

**Mr HODGE** — Geelong and Greensborough. We could provide you with examples of those and some of the programs. I think also it is important to note that they are relatively cheap to fund. A cynic would say, 'They are probably lighting and paving and bus shelters', but the truth is that if you get the function and form right, there are the community safety outcomes and — —

**Ms HARTLAND** — I think it would be good to have some examples of those.

**Mr HODGE** — We could provide you with a bit of detail about some of those programs. I am trying to think of where those are; there are definitely a lot more. I would probably prefer just to give you a list, if I could. I will bring that back.

**Mr GINIVAN** — Attachment 3 to the submission includes a number of examples, but we will get you some additional ones as well — particularly attachment 2.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — David, how did you measure the ROI on these projects?

**Mr HODGE** — I did not do that. John, do you know how we did the cost-benefit ratio? I think it was the returns, which was then just a cost-benefit analysis of that.

**Mr GINIVAN** — Yes.

**Mr HODGE** — We do not do return on investment; we do the cost-benefit ratio. So we would be inputting all the outcomes. I can provide you with the data on that. I have not got that, but it is probably pretty important that you have that, even as an example of how we did it.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Thank you.

**Mr HODGE** — We also have the building policy and programs; they again relate clearly to the energy efficiency of buildings. We are also looking at and have done a lot of work on bushfire rebuilds and shelter as well as fire protection, such as the wildfire management overlays. We certainly know the costs associated with that. Certainly there has been considerable — not concern — but it has certainly been pointed out that clearly there is a cost associated with that in terms of where that is building.

We also have a program of trying to work through the most flexible way of allowing people to rebuild in the flame zone within the wildfire management overlay. That is very, very difficult for us — to try to reconcile the competing interests of community and individual safety with the government's expectations around protection of life and property. To be frank, that is still winding its way through, and we are coming to a number of different points with that. It has been an interesting journey, and we are nowhere near through it.

The next chapter in that also relates to rebuilding and flood mapping in light of the recent floods, what has come through and the issues associated with that. The question will be how you map that. We, or DSE, are mapping not only the recent floods but also what that means for what we once thought were 100-year events. They need to recalibrate the 1-in-100-year floods. We are struggling with the idea or the issue that many people are simply rebuilding homes that were within flooded areas, so they would potentially be flooded again.

**Mrs PEULICH** — How you capturing that data in relation to the flood mapping?

**Mr HODGE** — With the flood mapping, the latest floods have been mapped. That data is now being overlaid onto the previous data, so we understand what was previously considered there and what is now considered to be maybe more than a 100-year or less than a 100-year flood. We are mapping the number of affected dwellings and also the overland flows that have occurred and trying to project some data onto that and then translate it into some sensible sort of control and overlay that either alerts people to the risk or provides an

opportunity to build a workaround — be that altered floor levels or different overland flow outcomes and drainage outcomes.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — Is it part of your work to bring people and the community with you? Because I don't know much, and, for example, if I had have been asked about a car when the T-model Ford was being built, I would probably have said I wanted a faster horse, because that is all I knew. Most people, I would suggest, are a bit like that. You are talking to us about a whole lot of fairly high level inputs that you need to factor into community safety, but is it part of your job to bring people into that space? And then how do you do that operationally?

**Mr GINIVAN** — It is partly our role, but the principal interface is local government. The organisational arrangements around what I will loosely call emergency management largely reside at a local government level in the first instance in terms of local government emergency management planning. That is principally the point where most local engagement occurs around what are the risks that are being dealt with and what are the local responses to those, but sitting— —

**Mr SCHEFFER** — So you talk to council planners: that is your interaction at that level — —

**Mr GINIVAN** — Council planners, engineers and CEOs, principally — —

**Mr SCHEFFER** — Yes, and then they talk to communities?

**Mr GINIVAN** — But sitting above that, depending on whether you are talking about fire, flood, landslip or another form of hazard and risk, will usually be either a regional perspective around what the risks are for the particular region or a state perspective around hazard. Fire is a good example: the recommendations of the royal commission in essence said that there should be a common assessment of the hazard across the state that everyone would then use as a basis for their respective level of decision making. That hazard-mapping task is led at the state level, but it will cascade down through local government emergency management planning, through CFA logistical planning and through DSE's fire-burning regime planning et cetera. The same applies with flood: flood mapping is done by DSE, principally working with catchment management authorities as the floodplain managers, and that will cascade down into municipal planning schemes and emergency management planning.

Usually the principal point of interface is, if you like, at the local government level, because that is where it hits the ground. That is where most of the conversations occur, and that is the way the planning process is organised, from that level upwards.

**The CHAIR** — What sort of level of involvement would you have, leaving aside the risk areas? For something like Armstrong Creek, say, how would DPCD planning deal with the City of Greater Geelong on that?

**Mr GINIVAN** — In that case the working model was a joint partnership model jointly chaired by Prue Digby, the deputy secretary for planning and local government, and the CEO of the City of Greater Geelong. There was a coordinating partnership arrangement put in place between the department and the city with funding support to the City of Greater Geelong to progress the planning work it needed to do for Armstrong Creek. That coordinating arrangement also brought in all of the other relevant agencies — education, transport, health et cetera — to ensure that there was a comprehensive approach to future infrastructure needs. There was a jointly supported project around determining the infrastructure plan for the entire community and the sequencing of infrastructure delivery so that the right things were put in place at the right time. That also included a comprehensive engagement around the water use strategies and the sequencing of the development front to optimise return on investment from sewerage and also water.

We would identify that as probably a very good example of where state government and local government worked to ensure that all the relevant agencies came together at the same time with the same set of drawings to put all their issues on the same table and work out a way forward in terms of an urban development front. In terms of size, that is the largest urban development front outside of Melbourne and probably the most comprehensively planned in the sense of a very clear understanding of what all the infrastructure requirements are and the proper sequencing of that.

**The CHAIR** — Obviously it being the biggest had something to do with why DPCD was in that partnership, but you cannot be involved in every new largish development to that degree. Is that correct?

**Mr GINIVAN** — No. We have in fact had a deliberate agenda of improving support to regional local governments particularly around growth area planning and management. We have the Growth Areas Authority, which deals with greenfields urban development in the growth areas of Melbourne, and that is principally about precinct planning and organising the logistics of infrastructure. We are deliberately delivering that sort of service into the major regional centres. Geelong was clearly a first-order priority given the urgency around Armstrong Creek, but we have a similar process running for Ballarat, Bendigo, Wodonga and the cluster of towns in the Latrobe Valley.

**Mr HODGE** — And Shepparton a little bit. We are involved in most of them. I think Armstrong Creek has been an incredibly successful project in terms of the way we manage the interface with all the stakeholders, not only the governmental stakeholders. The landowners were also involved in it as well. As you know, the consultation process that was undertaken with Armstrong Creek engaged with the community.

**Mr ELSBURY** — I am just wondering about when you have an area of explosive growth and how that all works. With places like Caroline Springs and Taylors Hill, coming down into Tarneit, Truganina, Wyndham Vale and Point Cook, there are massive amounts of growth happening almost before your eyes. What strategies are being put in place there?

**Mr HODGE** — The strategy there is essentially with the Growth Areas Authority, and the Growth Areas Authority needs to prioritise its work to deliver the land. In those areas the demand is immense, and the need to keep land supply up is almost insatiable there. The corresponding issue is keeping up community infrastructure — delivering not only on physical infrastructure but on community infrastructure as well. The City of Wyndham will tell you that it needs some ridiculous number of kindergartens. It needs a new one every nine weeks or something. It is literally unbelievable the number it needs. The level of work, the master planning, the growth area planning and the precinct planning are done by the Growth Areas Authority.

DPCD's role is frankly to get out of the way and make sure that it happens. We are the regulatory body and the minister is the regulatory entity that will rezone that land and essentially bring it into the right zone for land use, so we have a very clear agenda of bringing that land through that regulatory process in days or weeks. That is part of the process — the back end of the Growth Areas Authority process — for us. That is the role we play.

**Mr ELSBURY** — Would any changes to the density of housing assist in that provision? There is going to be a tipping point whereby you increase the density to a point where you can provide almost every service under the sun but you lose the effect that people want by moving out into those areas. If you want to have access to rail and public transport readily available, you move into somewhere like West Footscray or some of the older suburbs up near Essendon and that sort of area. Regarding the vision of the backyard with a dog running around and the kids on a swing set, what do you see as being the common ground that we can reach with population density and keeping a lifestyle without losing the services?

**Mr HODGE** — The density that we aspire to in the growth areas now is about 15 lots per hectare. If you were to look at places that were developed 40 years ago — Burwood, for example, or Glen Waverley — they are probably 10 lots per hectare or less. The view is that the growth areas are chewing up valuable land, but the densities there are quite high and in many ways comparable to the densities that are within 8 or 9 kilometres of the city — some of those older, more established areas that we instantly think are high density. There is a bit of a misnomer there that the fringe is chewing up valuable land and that we are not doing our planning right. We have the data to back that up, if you want to see that.

The next platform I think we need to move to is a model of delivery of land on the fringe in which a land developer subdivides it, cuts it up, sells it and moves on. We can achieve densities in the order of 25 lots per hectare that achieve standards of living that I think are consistent with people's expectations of a backyard, a sandpit, a trampoline and a swing set, but the type of development outcome you look for there is what I would call an integrated build-out, so that the land subdivider and the builder are one entity.

An example of that would be Waverley Park on the old Waverley Park site, developed by Mirvac. That sort of development is providing master-planned accommodation or subdivisions that are seen to be highly desirable in that they are commanding a higher price than the surrounding area, yet the housing size is well planned and well

designed so there is not a lot of wasted space in those houses. However, people seem to be able to achieve three or four bedrooms, a dining room, a living room, a study, a backyard and a double garage on 225 square metres rather than 450 square metres, and they are paying similar sorts of prices.

My opinion would be that the answer is that we need to move the market or the product to an integrated build-out product in those sorts of areas. I do not think the answer is a 5-storey apartment building in Werribee. I think there will be a time and a place for those sorts of developments, and we are seeing apartments in areas that we would not expect to see them. I have to say that I was proven wrong when I saw apartments being sold in Dandenong, and we have a number being proposed in Footscray. We have a number being proposed and marketed in Ringwood, Box Hill, Mount Waverley and particularly through some of the other suburbs in the west.

Because I have parliamentary privilege, I will say it here: land developers are dumb. They do what they have done for the last 20 years, and they have not — —

**Mr ELSBURY** — That is on the record now, by the way.

**Mr HODGE** — That is fine. I will happily stand by it and see it published. They will do what they have continually done and what they have made money doing in the past. I think there is an opportunity for leadership on behalf of government to lead the market into this integrated build-out, so if the committee was interested in pursuing that particular form of development and understanding how that worked, we could certainly arrange to get you to Waverley Park or even Beacon Cove, for that matter. The form and function of those communities is radically different to what we would see as traditional fringe developments — I would happily organise a bus and we could get people to see you — because what we see in those developments is a form which has pocket parks, small bits of open space, rather than large pieces of open space. Councils love these large parks because they can pay one person to drive a tractor around them.

We struggled with the development form, firstly, at Beacon Cove, where there were small parks that were custom made, effectively, for the community. I invite the committee to go down there at 4 o'clock on any afternoon during the week. There will be a row of parents lined up with their kids running around in the park out in front of their houses. The same goes for Waverley Park, although it is not as functional because it is not finished. But I think that is an aspiration that we could strive towards.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Going towards the issue of cost, economic wellbeing is crucial when you are looking at housing, and obviously many of those who are buying into a first home, emerging communities and so forth need affordable housing. You mentioned earlier that building something with just as many bedrooms and so forth on a half a block size was comparable in price. Are you saying that the quality and cost of housing is higher but it is being delivered on a more compact block size? Is it more affordable, that is? I am not surprised that flats and apartments are selling in Dandenong. Many people who come from our emerging communities where the density of living is much higher and the backyard is an unknown experience are looking for something that is affordable into which they can buy, which is achievable. Could you talk about the cost of construction?

**Mr HODGE** — The cost of construction is a really interesting question. The answer is that all houses are essentially made out of the same products, so the basic fundamental cost is the same. The budget builders are building for around \$1200 to \$1400 a square metre. They use the same pine, the same plasterboard, the same everything. It is actually the fittings and fixtures that cost the money in these houses, and obviously the additional room costs so much per square metre. But what I was saying is that you can get a fully functioning home which is smaller than a 42-square mansion that provides all the same functions and all the same opportunity, in 220 squares.

The market research, the developers and builders will tell you that people do not know the difference. Their trick is they get people to pay a similar amount for a 225-square metre house on a 280-square metre block as opposed to a 450-square metre block and a 420-square metre house. They get people to pay the same price because they are smart, and that is what they do. I am saying that the market is so unsophisticated that there is no competition in that marketplace, so it is seen as the boutique end of the market. But I think we should be encouraging land developers — or saying it is not acceptable to carve the land up and run, leaving the development and outcomes to third parties.

This is because if you integrate it much better, the outcomes are very clear in that if you know what the house next door is going to look like, you can plan your open space so that there is no overlooking; you can plan your open space so it has proper solar access; you can plan where your bedrooms are so that they are not going to be impacted by the noise from the neighbours — —

**Mrs PEULICH** — So you are supporting the development of estates by a single developer as opposed to small builders developing small numbers? Therefore does that also not impact on cost — less competition the bigger the estate?

**Mr HODGE** — Yes, it does. As you were saying that, I was supporting that as a concept. I am not necessarily saying that we should have 1000 hectares done by one developer. I think you can actually regulate the built form in a way that means that these need to be master planned. You certainly need to do that. If you look at the Kew Cottages site, the builder is one developer but he will give one particular builder 6 houses, 10 houses, 4 houses, 5 houses to, yet it is still master planned and they are still able to take a reasonable profit off the top. So I am saying there is a tension with maintaining a competitive market and the reconciliation of that is the difficult part of that equation.

**The CHAIR** — Can I suggest that we quickly go back to the presentation and explore the wider — —

**Mr HODGE** — Sure. We are pretty much getting through it anyway.

**The CHAIR** — Is there anything else that you really think we need to know?

**Mr HODGE** — That is the broiler farm example there. You can see that the way it is regulated it has all of those specific outcomes and relates to those things there.

**Mr GINIVAN** — Again, just in terms of evidence, when you look at the issue of buffers and you look at things like live venue noise and the monitoring around that, the impact of planning law around emissions of noise from live music venues means that the number of complaints now is very low. So again to the extent that we are able to track a health impact, a public benefit from the application of reasonable planning and building laws, that is an example around buffers, particularly where EPA monitoring shows a demonstrable benefit from having those laws in place.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Not airport noise?

**Mr GINIVAN** — Not always; there will always be exceptions, but in general — —

**Mr HODGE** — Or flight path noise.

**Mrs PEULICH** — That is right; exactly.

**Mr HODGE** — An interesting comment is that with airports you map the ANEFs, which is the air noise exposure forecasts, I think. But that is actually not the problem sometimes; it is flight paths, as you know, through some of the areas.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — David, you talked about lot sizes per hectare. I was down in Wyndham last week, and there was a perception amongst the group that I met there that the increased density has increased the general ambient temperature.

**Mr HODGE** — That is this slide. This is one of John's favourite slides. Did you want to talk to that?

**Mr GINIVAN** — I will certainly talk to it. Urban heat island effect is something I am sure the committee will have received comments on. It is a phenomenon of any large city across the world. This is some work that the Department of Health is doing, looking at the vulnerability of communities. It was largely influenced in terms of the data by the increase in additional deaths that occurred during the Black Saturday bushfires which were not part of the fires.

I think the opportunity that we are very interested in in a planning sense is how this links to work that the water ministerial advisory council is doing in terms of opportunities for urban water reuse and what that might lead to in terms of additional capacity for street trees and greening of urban landscapes.

I was at a conference earlier in the year which floored me. There was a guy from Sao Paulo, where they are now recording a 12-degree temperature difference between the edge of Sao Paulo and the inner city. The consequence of that is that their biggest risk now is flash flooding resulting from microclimate changes because of the added temperature leading to daily rain events, which are exceeding the coping capacity of the drainage system. They are now looking at the role of their surrounding forest and urban vegetation in trying to reduce that hazard. Again, our interest in this particular theme is — —

**Mrs PEULICH** — High density and high — —

**Mr GINIVAN** — High density does not necessarily mean a higher temperature. It can, but the challenge I think is to move to a smarter form of development where you might achieve higher density but you perhaps have fewer cars, more walkability and also a greener urban streetscape or roof space that comes with it.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Is there work being done on that?

**Mr GINIVAN** — Yes.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Where?

**Mr GINIVAN** — By us and with the water ministerial advisory council.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Are there models of this globally?

**Mr GINIVAN** — Yes. Japan is very advanced; it is probably the leader.

**Mr HODGE** — Hong Kong.

**Mr GINIVAN** — Hong Kong and a number of European cities.

**Mr HODGE** — We met with the equivalent of the minister for planning for Hong Kong. The only thing she was interested in talking about was this heat island effect and associated issues. As that applies to us, we have finally understood the need for natural ventilation, particularly in high-rise and high-density buildings. The capacity to ventilate these buildings naturally has immense energy-saving but also health effects. We are incorporating that into design. The better architects understand it; the other ones do not.

**Ms HARTLAND** — I recently went to a talk by an emergency physician at St Vincent's who talked about this effect, especially in the week leading up to Black Saturday. They had huge numbers of vulnerable older people coming through the hospital, especially those who were living in the Office of Housing high rise, because the hospital was cooler. The work that can be done here with new structures is obvious, but what can we do about existing structures, especially things like Office of Housing high-rise?

**Mr GINIVAN** — The housing department is part of the work that the Department of Health is running on this, where they are certainly looking at the contribution of the building stock in a human vulnerability sense. My perception is that over time as existing structures are refurbished there will be an improvement in the basic form of the buildings in terms of their insulation qualities and those sorts of things. One of the roles that our department plays is to set the minimum standards in terms of building performance. When you look at the practical long-term effect over time of requiring that structures be built with good insulation qualities and so forth, it will be to improve the resilience of people who are using those structures.

There is not going to be an instant, overnight solution to what is a lot of aged stock. If you look at the City of Melbourne's experience with their 1200 commercial buildings as an example, that is a good model where there has been an overt process of trying to bring forward the renewal timetable for a significant number of commercial buildings, which includes accommodation buildings, to improve their environmental performance. This leads to a benefit for the people who are using them. It is a long, slow process, but my sense is that most of the agencies are part of a fairly active process now, thinking about what is the consequence of heat and peak events for their particular client group.

**Ms HARTLAND** — I understand that long-term work is being done, but what I am concerned about is what happens if it happens again this year or next year? It seems to me, especially with older vulnerable people, that

we are going to have the same number of people die — 380 — as the number who died in that week leading up to Black Saturday. It does not feel like we are going to manage that.

**Mr GINIVAN** — Possibly. Although coming out of the response to the royal commission report there was a lot of thought put into the issue of how you keep track of vulnerable members of the community. I know through the health portfolio in particular there has been a lot of thought given to how the forecast and warning process works so that agencies are better able to gear up on the assumption that if there is a peak heat event that is going to be of prolonged duration, they are able to put contingency planning in place that enables the most vulnerable people to be brought into different accommodation. So there are some plans in place for exactly that sort of contingency.

**Ms HARTLAND** — If that happens this year, are we ready for it this year?

**Mr GINIVAN** — I believe we are probably more advanced and more prepared than we perhaps were when Black Saturday happened, because there has been a lot of work since Black Saturday around this very issue of what is the consequence of prolonged heat.

**Ms HARTLAND** — Sorry, I am taking up a lot of time, but I would like to give you an example of a constituent who has been in to see me in the last week. I formerly worked in the high-rise in Williamstown, so I know these residents. She has permission to have an air conditioner put inside her flat, but she has waited 18 months for the Office of Housing to come and put the bolts on the wall so that she can have her air conditioner. If we are saying that we are prepared — —

**Mr GINIVAN** — I had better take the Makita down on the weekend.

**The CHAIR** — Can we get some sort of understanding on our side in terms of just finishing this and then we can have equal access to questions?

**Mr SCHEFFER** — I think from what you have said you have basically covered it.

**Mr HODGE** — Yes. We talked about the safety and safe settlements. I think we have been through those sorts of issues. On the flood overlays, there is a mismatch between the new ones. Again, we talked about the subdivision design and the issues of subdivision design, the mapping and proximity to facilities, so walking. There are a lot of indicators there that talk about how we map settlements, how close people are to facilities and the sorts of developments you encourage that are in close proximity to those areas.

Then we talked about the needs for open space. We are doing audits of open space across Melbourne now and trying to understand that. It is not telling us anything that we do not already know, in many ways, in terms of where the supply is. As I said to you, the subtlety about that is the type of open space that local government demands and the type of open space that communities would probably prefer. I do not believe there is a match there, and we need to try to reconcile that. Many of the newly emerging communities, particularly in the growth areas, are providing open space that is managed through a body corporate, and the communities are taking responsibility for those areas. The one at Point Cook called Alamanda is probably the best example of that, where there is a community facility as well with a swimming pool, meeting rooms that are used pretty much all day, every day by everything from the local church groups through to mothers groups, community interest groups and so on.

It has been quite successful, and it would seem that people are happy to pay. I don't think it is a lot of money. I think it is about \$800 per year for those levels of services. In some communities that would be unacceptable. In these communities it seems to be okay. That leads to the point that in terms of this open space provision and these community facilities, there are a couple of views around that the current regulatory framework around subdivision and body corporate entities does not necessarily encourage or facilitate that. In an apartment building it is very easy to do that, but in a greenfield site it is not as easy to have those body corporates and community-owned and run facilities as well. So there would potentially be an opportunity to refine that or take out the uncertainty in those sorts of areas if we were looking at trying to encourage that sort of development, which I believe has widespread acceptance and expectation that it be there now.

We have the Livable Neighbourhoods work that is being done. Again, cultural identity is also ResCode and the Urban Design Charter for Victoria, which has been done by our urban design people. The policy agenda, as you

know, is being driven by the advisory committee that is reviewing the planning system. The metropolitan strategy is currently being developed and will be released in 2013 for comment, but the engagement process is starting. Again those policies will certainly have health and livability goals within them. So that is the sort of genre of what we are here to talk about. We are happy to move on to some specifics if you want to.

**Mr TEE** — I have a couple of things from other witnesses to raise before I come back to the presentation. We had people from COTA, the Council on the Ageing, speak to us, and they were urging us to have a recommendation that the standards that apply — I think we legislated this year for standards that apply in commercial and public buildings in terms of access —

**Mr HODGE** — Accessibility? Yes.

**Mr TEE** — be moved across to the domestic building market, such as the width of doors, corridors and walls that you can have a railing on and so on. And the issue of costs came up. They indicated that the government had done work in terms of that cost, and I suppose I would not mind having access to the work that has been done in terms of the cost of —

**Mr HODGE** — The cost differential?

**Mr TEE** — yes, that is right — mandating those sorts of standards in the domestic building industry.

**Mr HODGE** — Yes. We can chase that down for you. The other comment would be that you do not necessarily need to go all the way in terms of the direct translation of the commercial accessibility arrangements to domestic arrangements, because you can often set the design up so it is accessible. The building industry would tell you that it might just be a case of putting a noggin or a plate in the wall behind the plaster so that should you need to put a handle in a toilet or a shower, the structure is there behind it. The timber costs nothing; it is an offcut. If you can bring those sorts of opportunities in and make sure those things are done, then you deal with those things.

I know with the Commonwealth Games village, which had to be fully disability compliant, we had a lot of trouble getting thresholds — as in door jambs and things — that were level with the porch entry. In fact I think one of the manufacturers designed one and delivered that into the village. That has now become a bit of a standard fitting, and it is easier to do those things. So the market probably does need to be pushed a little bit in regards to that. The other issue would be that with the width of hallways and entrance doors and those sorts of things there will be a cost, because you just use more land and more material.

**Mr TEE** — I suppose I am asking about the cost, but any of that kind of information that you have got in terms of, as you said, giving the market a bit of a kick along in that area would be helpful.

**Mr HODGE** — Yes.

**Mr TEE** — The other issue you raise, on page 8, is in relation to major hazard facilities, and I think we have a number of those in Melbourne. It is an issue that I think has had some considerable attention in the UK. I understand that some months ago the minister advised that there was some work being done on looking at whether or not we ought to have buffers, what their size would be and whether or not we ought to follow some of the 300-metre buffers that have been put in in other jurisdictions. Can you give us a sense of where that work is up to and what we are likely to see in that space?

**Mr GINIVAN** — We have some preliminary work under way in relation to buffers as a principle, and the first part of that work is being done through the Planning and Environmental Law Association. We are trying to get an analysis of what the different approaches to buffers have been, because the reality is that if you look at mining, for example, the buffers for mining are within the mining site. If you look at other uses, the buffer is in effect on private land adjoining a site, where the ability to use that adjoining land is controlled by the requirement for a buffer. There are various other versions in between, so we are initially working through a process of trying to understand the principles of what buffers are actually around and what the policy ramifications are of buffers on site versus off site. We are doing that work in conjunction with the Environment Protection Authority, because the EPA is equally trying to work through its own role under its legislation around buffers. On the basis of that piece of analysis, we are then looking to put a policy paper together on what a new model for buffers might be.

**Mr TEE** — Is it envisaged that that policy paper would be something that would be then subject to consultation? Would it be put out in public — —

**Mr GINIVAN** — We would expect so, in the normal fashion.

**Mr TEE** — Do you have a sense of the timing around that? What is the — —

**Mr GINIVAN** — We are only at a very early stage of that work at the moment. We have not had a — —

**Mr TEE** — I do not want an exact date — just like 6 months or 12 months.

**Mr GINIVAN** — Probably more in the 12-month time frame — 6 to 12 months. Just on the hazardous sites issue, the other thing that is interesting, I think, in terms of a health and wellbeing lens is some of the work that is being progressed through the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the emergency services commission around the response to large-scale emergency events. Again the western suburbs is probably a very good example of one of the most integrated, prepared models across local government, and MFB — —

**Ms HARTLAND** — I am not sure they have told the community that.

**Mr GINIVAN** — Sorry?

**Ms HARTLAND** — I have not noticed that. I have lived there for 25 years, and I have gone through a number of chemical disasters. I have never noticed an integrated response to community in terms of alerting them to it, but I would be happy to talk to you about that at length.

**Mr GINIVAN** — We might come back in — —

**Ms HARTLAND** — Yes.

**Mr GINIVAN** — The emergency services have recently completed a major new strategy around how local government communication works in an emergency. Nine times out of 10 the first point of contact will be local government, when often local government will be the last to know what the actual emergency is. There is a whole lot of work that has gone into the communication flow to ensure that the person who is going to be answering the phone actually knows what is going on. There is also a whole lot of new capacity around rapid hazard assessment of the likely consequences of the event for the particular community that is affected so that those people can be best advised about what to do — for example, stay indoors or run outdoors and disappear.

**Ms HARTLAND** — What if it is a chlorine fire?

**Mr GINIVAN** — Exactly. What is the nature of the event? A few weeks ago I was at a demonstration of this modelling. It has taken things that used to take 2 hours to work out down to a few minutes, done live at the incident, which can be linked up with the communication that is then supplied to the affected community so that people are actually getting relevant, usable, practical information about what to do.

One of the things that is interesting in the sense of the discussion earlier around heat and the quality of building stock is that generally the newer the building, the greater the resilience of the people in it because it is generally more airtight. If you have chemical spills, smoke — that sort of thing — a person inside a house who is not on fire will have far less impact because it takes longer for the smoke or the chemical or otherwise to permeate a modern building compared to an old building. Again, if we are thinking about heat island effects and all those sorts of things, a progressive move to better building stock with insulation and greater sealing of structures has a spin-off in terms of those locations where you have greater exposure and vulnerability to smoke and chemical-type events.

There is a lot of quite fascinating and exciting work. I live in the western suburbs as well, and — —

**Ms HARTLAND** — But there has been no engagement. I am aware of the program you are talking about, because I heard about it on the radio. There are no leaflets in anybody's letterboxes. I have not seen anything in the local paper. There is nothing out from the local council, and we have just had our rates bill. You would think that would have been the time to send it out.

**Mr GINIVAN** — I think all that is planned to come.

**Ms HARTLAND** — When?

**Mr GINIVAN** — That was my impression.

**Ms HARTLAND** — It would be nice to know when it is going to be. I was quite shocked when I heard it on the radio, because I was not aware of it. Considering I have been very involved in community alerting, you would think that they might talk to the community.

**Mr TEE** — One of the — —

**The CHAIR** — Hang on. I am sorry; Craig has been very patient at the end here.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Perhaps it is because I am tired. David and John, we have talked to a range of people, and there seems to be a sense that planners do not always factor public health into their design and planning processes. Are you going to be on that?

**Mr HODGE** — I think planners factor in public health in terms of the form and function of communities. I think new communities certainly have regard to walkable neighbourhoods, open space, community safety and urban design as it relates to safety. Then at the next tier down we are talking about the provision of other facilities that relate to health, so that might be education facilities, kindergartens — all that sort of thing. That is a core part of the planning process too — getting the locations of those areas right.

We are now investigating the idea of creating health precincts, and we have been talking directly to the Minister for Health. The Minister for Planning and Minister for Health have engaged directly on this issue of looking at creating health precincts and enabling zoning framework that would allow public health facilities to establish pretty seamlessly in locations that are highly desirable. I am not talking about government-owned facilities as well; I am talking about things like x-ray clinics and private consultation rooms and those sorts of things in and around larger public health precincts.

Just recently I have looked at the area around Sunshine Hospital, where the council has done its bit. I think the fault there was that the council wanted to introduce what we call a design and development overlay to facilitate public health facilities in and around Sunshine Hospital. All it did was add another hurdle that anybody who wanted to build a radiology clinic had to jump over to get into that precinct. The criticism is valid there, because it was all based around design. All the council planners cared about was what it looked like, what the setback was, whether there was a screen on the back fence to screen the facility from the residential area and whether there was enough parking. All those things are vitally important, but you can codify all of that. You do not need to write a 30-page document to insert into your planning scheme as a policy to facilitate public health facilities around Sunshine Hospital.

I can understand why that criticism is there, and I do not think we have collectively understood what we need to do in that regard across the planning industry or through local government. But I think the basic premise of the form and function of communities and how that works is pretty much there. I think people can be critical about the lag in provision of those facilities, so the greatest criticism is that people move in before those facilities are there. Yes, that is true.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Do you think we will get to the point where professional planners will have permission to mandate public health provisions within a planning scheme?

**Mr HODGE** — What sorts of provisions would you be talking about?

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — You touched on a number of them today.

**Mr HODGE** — Kindergartens?

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Yes.

**Mr HODGE** — There is certainly a provision for those facilities. We will tell you where the precinct is, where the school has to go and where the community facility has to go in the zoning scheme. Particularly in the

precinct structure planning and growth areas it is very easy to do. Retrofitting that into communities is near impossible. Governments have had a go at it. I think the ones that you could probably look towards now would be the housing affordability projects that are being done across Stonnington and the city of Yarra. They will have multifunction facilities that have been retrofitted into them. They are something that we have wholeheartedly supported, although we certainly have not mandated them, because we are not paying for them. I would be reluctant to mandate anything that locked government into particular patterns of spending in those areas, albeit they would be highly desirable.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — My question is the same as the issue that Craig has raised with you. Other witnesses have indicated to us that what they would desire would be to have health as an objective in the planning and environment act. They have been pretty clear about that. I am not going to ask you anything to do with policy. I just want you to focus on operational questions. The act is being reviewed. Could you tell us about where that review process is up to and whether a health objective is under consideration for inclusion as an objective in the legislation.

**Mr GINIVAN** — There is not a specific health objective, in the sense that the objectives of the act talk more broadly around good social outcomes, good environmental outcomes and good economic outcomes. One of the things that is often interesting in the planning space is, at the end of the day, how does a decision-maker, a planner in a local government or otherwise, know what it is they are expected to do to deliver the right answer? One of the things that is a challenge in framing a planning act is keeping it as specific as possible in terms of what are the things that it is actually seeking to do. My sense at the moment is that the act is very broad in its interpretation. It can be very broad in terms of what it addresses already in the sense of driving the creation of communities, driving the planning for communities. A simple objective that also sorts out health — well, that is part of a social outcome already.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — I do not think the witnesses have been talking about a simple objective. They have been talking about it being an objective and obviously various subsets or various sections of the legislation stipulating how a health component or a health consideration is built into the legislation. That is what has been put to us, and, really, I think you have probably answered the question that the direction the review is going is of a more general nature, and I will draw from what you have said that health in the ways that I have described it, reflecting what I think other witnesses are telling us, has not thus far been built into the review of the legislation.

**Mr GINIVAN** — When you look at the planning system more broadly I guess you could say it is generally in the various other policy statements that occur through the Victorian planning provisions where you can start to get some greater articulation of what might a health objective actually mean, and it is in there where we have things like we ought to be trying to design communities so that walkability is possible. We could design them so that you can only go everywhere by car, or we can consciously say that if you have at least got the option to walk, there is more of a chance that people will walk, with a consequential benefit. Equally in terms of open space provision, it is in the Victorian planning provisions in particular where it articulates that open space ought to be usable and accessible, not simply an afterthought.

**Mr SCHEFFER** — I understand, but I am just conscious that Brian wants to ask a question. Could I just flag that on page 2 of the document that you have provided us with, a summary of the main opportunities for intervention to influence health and wellbeing available, and you have a series of six dot points there, I might put something in writing later for you to respond to those, so that I do not take up the time now.

**Mr HODGE** — That would be great. Thank you.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Just on that theme, somebody actually even suggested that we should have a health professional sitting on planning panels. Comments?

**Mr HODGE** — I think that is a good idea. We have professionals in relation to heritage, transport, traffic engineering, open space, architecture and design. There is absolutely no reason why that should not occur, particularly in matters that would relate to public health outcomes.

**Mrs PEULICH** — So how would you narrow that?

**Mr HODGE** — Yes, that is a good idea. Yes, you should do that.

**Mrs PEULICH** — So, say, a green wedge task force — would you see a health professional as someone who should be sitting on such a task force?

**Mr HODGE** — It is a question of what sorts of issues you would be asking them. A health professional on a green wedge task force — I do not know that that is entirely relevant, because I think you might be looking more for someone with a bit of expertise around the urban design and form of communities so that we can achieve those health outcomes of walkability, connectivity and community safety. We will get the location of health facilities right, because we will be told that by the providers, where they need to go and the demand, so I am not sure that it would be entirely relevant on a green wedge task force.

**Mr TEE** — I just want to come back to some of the issues that you talked about earlier on. I suppose you are saying that you can have density of 25 lots per hectare in a way that ensures that you do not have the heat island effect, because you have got trees and parks. One of the issues that came up for us when Wyndham council gave evidence was that they said we should aspire for those sorts of communities. Their precinct plan, if you read it, was sensational, but the developers are able to not manipulate them, but they are too broad in their framing that they all sort of get dumbed down. By the time you get to what is on the ground, you sort of get the dormitory suburbs and you get the lack of open space and so on. One of the things you raised was that maybe if the owner is the developer is the seller, so that you have more the sort of Mount Waverley examples, I am wondering what else we could do to ensure that we get better outcomes on the ground so that we do not have an aspirational precinct structure plan, which is actually developed on or delivered on the ground.

**Mr HODGE** — I think first of all the urban form can be controlled to some extent, so that is why I am a big fan of the integrated build-out idea, but I think the public realm is really important and the ability to invest in the public realm. By that I mean the open space and the road reserves and streets.

**Mr TEE** — Just to be clear, that means that the government is clear that it wants to have this amount of open space with this amount of accessibility, and in a sense it is uncompromising about that.

**Mr HODGE** — My experience is that local government is uncompromising in that regard. They are very good at that. The issues would be that in many ways, I think that — —

**Mr TEE** — You are amongst friends!

**Mr HODGE** — You have got the feeling that I think that local governments are very conservative about innovation and new ideas in relation to those areas. You only have to look at some of the difficulties that surround the provision of open space and the issues around concerns around public liability. There are examples of absolutely fantastic playgrounds that developers want to provide; public art, innovative street lighting and all of those sorts of things that really go a long way to providing a really high-quality public realm. Local government is very conservative about taking on responsibilities, because ultimately they are the ones who are responsible for the liability, maintenance and paying for it. And so there is a real reluctance to take that on.

The public realm is so important in established urban areas as well, as you know. You just have to look at examples. I have a presentation I would love to show you which can show you two or three parallel streets in South Yarra and Richmond. One of the streets has a fantastic public realm, and all it is is that is a street of plane trees and the next street has nothing at all. The difference in ambience, in quality, in heat effect and in quality of life is immense.

We would be able to deliver some outcomes through funding a program of greening Melbourne to provide decent public realm street trees through established areas. I am not only talking about the inner city; I am talking about places like Yarraville and through Hampton and some of those places where you could clearly improve the quality of life in those areas through managing the public realm a lot better.

**Mrs PEULICH** — They will not plant proper trees; they will only plant prunes, because it lifts the pavement.

**Mr HODGE** — That is their conservative approach, and that is where we have to get around it.

**Mr GINIVAN** — One of the other things that is going to be interesting in terms of whether councils' desired plans actually appear on the ground will be to see within five to six years whether the effect of what is in current

precinct structure planning rules and guidelines does appear on the ground. It is interesting that in work DPCD has done looking at the density of development delivered on the ground, where the rules changed five or six years ago, it is only in roughly the past 12 months that you start to see the effect of those rule changes coming through in what is being put down as current subdivisions because of the lag.

I think the expectation we would have is that the precinct structure planning guidelines are quite firm and clear. We would have an expectation that if a precinct structure plan or growth area framework plan is approved, then the fundamental skeleton of what should be on the ground will appear on the ground. We would expect to be starting to see that flow through when the development of that subdivision actually occurs, which might be in three, four, five, six or seven years time from now when it actually hits the ground.

**Mr TEE** — You are saying Wyndham might be historical.

**Mr GINIVAN** — What you might be seeing in Wyndham is a latent effect of stuff that happened six, seven or eight years ago in terms of actual decisions.

**Mr HODGE** — I think what the council is saying is that they have been promised the world and delivered an atlas by developers.

**Mr TEE** — They do not want to have an adventure playground; they just would not mind a playground. The precinct strategy plan has it but is not delivered because — —

**Mr HODGE** — Yes, but subdivision plans do not get their approval unless they commit to the engineering drawings. It has occurred to me that maybe that is an issue for us in terms of educating local government and identifying for local governments proper approaches to procuring decent open space and the function of decent open space. Because the land area is mandated, the plans get signed off by local government and the standards get signed off by them, they really only have themselves to blame if they think they are going to get one thing, and something else turns up.

**Mr TEE** — As well as developers?

**Mr HODGE** — They do. They sign off on every single standard.

**Mr ELSBURY** — They sign off on the structure plan?

**Mr HODGE** — No, they sign off on engineering plans.

**Mr ELSBURY** — From experience, though, I live in one of those estates out in the city of Wyndham, and I can tell you now that the structure plan that was presented when the estate was first put in is totally different to the structure plan that we are actually living on. Roadways have been moved, bridges have not been built and there have been — —

**Mr HODGE** — I accept that point. You are absolutely right. I was talking about the build quality of the open space. I am talking about the build quality of the streets, the pavements, the kerbs, the street trees and those sort of things. Yes, developers come back and recut subdivisions or change roads and orientation. Again, that requires an approval process, so local government is potentially within their rights to say, ‘No, we do not accept that. We want something different’. I am not saying they should or should not change.

**The CHAIR** — That seems to be the gap, from the feedback we are getting. The local planners and the councils are saying to us that they feel there needs to be more of a hook, more of something that they can point to that says, ‘No, this has to be the case’ — that other than an objective there is something a little bit more mandatory.

**Mr HODGE** — Well, there are.

**Mr TEE** — I do not know if it was a criticism, necessarily, of the department.

**Mr HODGE** — Yes, I am not taking it as a criticism. I am suggesting that there are reasonably good guidelines that talk about connectivity, about the distance that people should be able to walk from a major transport route and about how they should be able to walk in a direct line. You know the old subdivision, which

is called a Radburn after the guy who designed these things? The best or worst example in Victoria would probably be in Geelong or Corio, where you have to go and buy a carton of milk, and as the crow flies it is about 300 metres, but you actually have to drive 2.5 kilometres to get around there.

We have made that mistake, and we are not going to make those mistakes again. There are very clear design standards and expectations around those subdivisions. In fact the greatest challenge for us as a community, as planners, is not to get it right in new communities — that is really easy — it is to refit those existing communities, to punch roads through in those communities and to look at the inevitability of some urban renewal in places like Doveton and parts of Broadmeadows and get that right in terms of a community function opportunity.

**Mr TEE** — You talked about the Melbourne planning strategy, and I think you said the engagement process was starting. I was wondering, if not now, if we would be able to get a sense of a breakdown of what is occurring. An aspect of the answer is if we want to have input in terms of improving public health outcomes, where does that fit into the review? Just give us a bit of a breakdown as to how the review will be broken up and what that looks like.

**Mr HODGE** — I will not answer that now, because it is early days. The program is coming forward and the minister is still working on that.

**Mrs PEULICH** — In relation to the structure plans, I raised this point earlier. Where middle Melbourne, which you are trying to retrofit, gets their noses out of joint is when they feel a degree of arrogance that, ‘We know better, and you can have it’. There is less open engagement of the community because if you can get it through and get it rubber-stamped by council, it might become a reality.

In particular, decisions made by planners or councils about degrees of consultation particularly impacts on councils where there may be an activity centre that straddles two different municipalities — or three in some instances. They have the discretion under the Planning and Environment Act on whether or not to consult with the person across the road. Do you think, in order to get the right outcome that there ought to be in those instances, some greater clarity about the consultation needs to occur?

**Mr HODGE** — I think there is a good opportunity to identify the type and level of consultation that should occur, because after the 20 years plus of the operation of the Planning and Environment Act, it is now being left up to the courts or VCAT to essentially deliver a number of precedents about that. So even the open-endedness of that has meant that there has been a lot of responses that are either way over the top or way underdone, and there is very little consistency around that.

**Mrs PEULICH** — The worst thing you can have happen in a public meeting is someone saying, ‘I did not receive a notice’.

**Mr HODGE** — On the other end, if you also almost codify that consultation outcome, if they live three suburbs across, you say to them that in all fairness — —

**Mrs PEULICH** — But sometimes we are talking about the other side of the street.

**Mr HODGE** — I understand that, and that is right, so it would serve everyone’s purpose because you often find that there is a conservative response. For example — and this is just a funny story — notification was required to be sent out for a particular development in Collins Street. It was required to be sent out, I think, to about 2000 people, including the owners of car spaces in car parks who lived in Hong Kong — they own a car space in Little Collins Street. That just shows you how it needs to be consistently defined.

**The CHAIR** — We are actually over time, so are there any burning questions from any of the members of the committee?

**Mr HODGE** — We are always happy to come back or answer them now.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — David, somebody has talked to us about the WHO healthy cities initiative. Is that widely embraced in Victorian planning?

**Mr HODGE** — I do not know a lot about it, I would have to say.

**Mr GINIVAN** — In broad terms, yes, in the sense that most of the intent of policy is around trying to achieve environments that are safe for people to be in, that function well and that have public transport et cetera. In terms of an overt program that seeks to take the World Health Organisation agenda and say, ‘It means exactly this for the city of Melbourne’, I do not think we could say we have that. But in terms of the intent, as I understand it, of what those initiatives are seeking, by and large our frameworks and our policy requirements deliver on that broad intent.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much.

**Mr HODGE** — Thank you for your attention.

**The CHAIR** — I am sure I speak of behalf of all the members when I say we really did get a lot out of that. There will be some follow-up, and we might need to do another face-to-face as well.

**Mr HODGE** — We are happy to come back; that would be great. And we will get that information to you.

**Committee adjourned.**

