

Metro Planning Strategy (MPS) Discussion Paper Launch - 26 Oct. 2012

Main Session speakers - Notes by Ian Wood, Save Our Suburbs

The Hon. Matthew Guy - Minister for Planning

Professor Roz Hansen - Chair of the Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) for the MPS

Saul Eslake - Chief Economist of Bank of America, Merrill Lynch Australia

Rob Adams - Director City Design at City of Melbourne, and Vice Chair of the Urbanisation Council of the World Economic Forum.

David Turnbull - CEO, City of Whittlesea

...who will then participate in a dynamic panel discussion facilitated by Jon Faine

Planning Minister Matthew Guy:

Roz Hansen, chair of the MAC for the MPS, produced the Discussion Paper with help from others including Kate Sullivan and Lester Townshend at DPCD.

Melbourne won't retain its most livable status with business as usual. All previous metro strategies had pros and cons, all were built on similar principles. The new MPS will be in place till 2050. The biggest single challenge is population growth - more kids are being born in Australia and migration is still high, so the next 40 years can't be like the last.

We must link planning and transport together, maintain our boulevard strategy and aim for Melbourne as a 24hour international city. The days of major expansion of the UGB are over. The EW tunnel is needed, along with a focus on heavy rail. That will require a whole-of-govt, local council and community approach.

To be long-lasting and effective, the MPS will draw on the positive aspects of earlier versions, including M2030 and Living Suburbs. We can't have a narrow political debate: there is no political objective. A bi-partisan approach is necessary, especially for funding implementation in the longer term. We should include all ideas, including some new ones from the MAC, eg. job clusters (bringing jobs to people as well as v.v.). We also need a comprehensive implementation plan prior to any launch date of the MPS.

The MPS is being developed in the context of existing growth policies. The primary concern is livability rather than population targets. We don't want to mandate numbers that councils would have to accommodate. We must maintain local character and livability. We need strategic sites for high density development as well as activity centres, eg. Fishermans Bend which is now at the structure plan stage.

Walkability is not in the Discussion Paper but it's part of the debate (refer to structure plans). We are working on bike paths off major roads because bike commuting will only increase.

Roz Hansen, chair of the MAC:

Melbourne will continue to grow - we must share the benefits as well as the risks. The MPS principles are being road-tested with the business community, councils and planners.

The outer suburbs have not been designed to enhance the possibilities for higher density.

Melbourne is inexorably linked to the global economy, we need to improve productivity. Job growth must be aligned with population growth.

We need to work with market influences and aim for polycentric centres to "unlock the capacity in established suburbs". The UGB should be locked in where there are natural boundaries. We need diverse housing at the right locations at reasonable prices.

Environmental resilience sounds good but is not reflected in govt. policy. Even if it is included in the MPS, will there be effective implementation strategies? Or a failure, like M2030? We must address environmental issues across the city - we need city-wide strategies as well as individual home-owner initiatives.

We must move away from regulation to make things happen; foster partnerships with business and the community to implement the MPS over a 40 year time frame - eg, with state & Local Govt cooperation. We will need investment in infrastructure to guide new development. Innovative funding methods include allowing councils to source new funds for their services.

We will need good governance structures to deliver the MPS - maybe a Metro Planning Authority with an infrastructure and planning role. We need targets for measuring progress and publishing indicators at the municipal and metro level to meet the need for feedback.

Saul Eslake, Chief Economist of Bank of America, Merrill Lynch Australia:

Background: Ken Henry's White Paper on Australia's future in Asia has just released by PM Gillard. The medieval Catholic Church banned interest so there was no capitalism in Europe in those days. Nehru & Gandhi constituted a socialist dynasty that obstructed growth. Now China and India are re-establishing their prime positions re world economic growth.

There is little benefit of the mining boom for Victoria, except indirectly through tax and the federal GST formula. Mining also helped the whole country avoid a recession but resource prices and investment are now dropping and the \$A will start to decline.

What can Australia sell to the emerging middle-class in Asia? Agricultural commodities & services (eg, education & tourism), plus value-adding. This should benefit regional Victoria. Thus foreigners must come here or Australians must go overseas to provide services there, so we need more efficient airport and transfer facilities. But air travel now takes longer due to waiting for other planes on the ground or circling in the air - this must be improved, including improving transport to & from Tullamarine.

The Govt need to sell assets to fund these changes, as well as using metropolitan improvement rates (as were used decades ago to fund the city underground). We also need realistic (ie, higher) speed limits on major freeways - Victorians pay \$100/yr each in speeding fines, \$33 more than in NSW.

We also need more affordable housing - there is a shortage of 20,000 homes (although the recent census figures may change this). Grants and stamp duty methods won't suffice - these just increase housing costs. NSW & Qld have recognized this and abolished them. What's needed is more assistance for buying new houses - some of this will admittedly line the pockets of developers but it will also improve house prices and accessibility.

Rob Adams, Director of City Design, City of Melbourne:

The consolidation of lots in the CBD has led to a loss of distinctiveness, although the city has taken back lots of car space and given it to pedestrians and cyclists.

Previous social, environmental and aesthetic issues have been joined by economic issues now - we need to use facilities more efficiently. We don't have the money to fund extra infrastructure to deal with 2 million more people over the next 2 decades.

There's now a huge increase in the number of dwellings in the CBD and the result is proportionately less infrastructure.

We can't change the city framework - it's a series of natural activity centres and transport corridors. Since the 1980s we have lost 89 million hectares of prime agricultural land, which makes no sense. (REF: <http://theage.domain.com.au/real-estate-news/home-owners-facing-loan-repayment-disaster-20120708-21pk1.html>)

It's much cheaper to build within the city limits. 8% of GDP comes from the residential sector. There are 34,000 dwelling sites in the inner suburbs along the major transport corridors, with 50% heritage areas and other unsuitable areas not included.

The Liberals' water policy is for no more dams, pipelines or desalination plants. Instead, the focus is on recycling and re-use. We need the same philosophy in planning. More local jobs correlate with more recycling; more older people means more part-time work

No city ever solved traffic congestion by building more roads.

Access Economics did a study for Diabetics Australia which stressed the benefits of walking to reduce obesity (REF: google "The growing cost of obesity in 2008: three years on").

Hi density doesn't mean high-rise (REFS:

<<http://udf.org.au/udf-quarterly/udfq-75-september-2006/article/what-value-is-urban-design/>>
<<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/urban/value-urban-design-full-report-jun05/index.html>>

The community doesn't trust planners. There is a need to explain why enough infrastructure can't be provided. Residents should be given options to choose where to put extra inhabitants. Yarra & Port Phillip councils have worked out strategic plans but it's more difficult for middle ring suburbs.

To preserve Heritage streetscape, don't build within 30m of the street. The key is setbacks. Then you also need bigger sites in order to avoid pencil thin hi-rise that visually intrudes because it's too close to the street

Development on the city fringe is decreasing in appeal, not only due to the financial crisis. This unfortunately also means that a lot of newly released land not only won't be built on but also can no longer be farmed either.

David Turnbull - CEO, City of Whittlesea

Success of the Growth Areas is vital to the success of the city. Whittlesea is the 2nd largest growing LGA (Local Govt. Area) in Australia:

- South Morang is the fastest growing suburb in the last 10 years
- 63 babies/wk
- Merinda/Doreen is the fastest growing Growth Area

However, the last 12 months have seen a (temporary?) slowdown, and there has also been a lot of regeneration in areas like Keon Park. Some people move to a Growth Area for economic reasons but the majority go there as a lifestyle choice

Governance and implementation are the critical factors for the MPS (as with M2030). The MPS "will include a plan for a Transport Plan". Affordability in the Growth Areas is really the cost of living, not just housing affordability.

A successful Growth Area needs vision, infrastructure, and a diverse housing market with competition.

Infrastructure must be provided in the early years (ie, schools, and community facilities). If it is not provided within the first 5 years, it will become a long-term problem due to living habits developed by local residents to compensate.

The govt has provided a Regional Growth Fund of \$1 billion but nothing for outer metro development. Eg, swimming/sports centres - the \$4.5m state subsidy has not changed for years but the costs of building such centres has grown from around \$10m to \$50.

Residents main gripe in our Growth Areas is that there is no supporting infrastructure, jobs, etc, and no rail links (because no money for them). There's also no bus/train timetable integration and not enough buses.

MPS will need a whole-of-govt approach, with guaranteed funding and bi-partisan political support.
