

Comment in response to Draft Growth Corridor Plans November 2011.

Contributed on behalf of Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association inc.

The Draft Growth Corridor Plans have been examined with particular focus on the Melbourne South East Growth Corridor Plan.

We cannot comment favourably on the draft plans and associated strategies, as there is widespread concern among members of the community, and indeed members of local councils, regarding the continuing spread of urban development and the extent of its incursion into viable farmland, high quality food growing locations and previously proclaimed green wedge areas.

We point out that in a time of climatic uncertainty, and given there is acknowledgment that Co2 emissions, urban heat island effects and large scale land clearing is contributing to changing climate conditions and extreme weather events, it is understandable that no benefit can be seen in the programs being put forward to grow the population by ever expanding housing settlements beyond the urban fringe.

Funding of the planned infrastructure, i.e. transport links, business and employment corridors, is queried on the large scale it is proposed. Taxpayers and ratepayers cannot continue to be burdened with the need to service increased debt of state and local government, and there is no certainty of funding for the long term plans being put forward. Indeed, many rural towns in municipalities bordering the urban grown boundary are not adequately serviced while their local council is focused on precinct structure planning and providing funding for accelerated growth infrastructure and services.

From an environmental aspect, the proposed strategies for waterways, biodiversity corridors and open space sound favourable as written, including corridors for growling grass frogs and links for future southern brown bandicoot habitat. However, the growth corridor plans will result in loss of current existing habit and pollution of creeks as they become urban drainage networks, so no genuine benefit or improvement can be claimed.

Habitat corridors and biolinks must be given genuine priority between Casey and Cardinia even if it means loss of land for development, and buffer zones surrounding waterways need to be increased if any value is to be achieved.

In 2008, a State government report warned that Victoria has the most devastated landscape in the country, and reported that more than half of all native vegetation and 80 percent of private land has been cleared since European settlement.

We note the land clearing referred to in the Frequently Asked Questions paper and there is provision for a low biodiversity category. We also note the levels of compliance required by the Commonwealth government. It is time the government took stock of what is occurring each time there is further expansion of the urban growth boundary.

Creating car dependant communities on the perimeter of Melbourne is unsound planning and should be revised on the basis that infinite expansion cannot continue if sustainability is to be considered.

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20th December 2012.