

## 6.2.8 2022 Victorian State Election - Advocacy Material

**Responsible GM:** Debbie Tyson  
**Author:** Shae Hansen

### Recommendation(s)

That Council:

- Endorse the key themes of the campaign and the advocacy pack, enabling the council members to use it in their advocacy work for the 2022 Victoria State election.
- Note the priorities of the IFC advocacy platform.

### Attachments

1. Cardinia Calls For - Advocacy Pack [6.2.8.1 - 28 pages]
2. IFC Week 2022 Priorities [6.2.8.2 - 20 pages]

### Executive Summary

The Advocacy pack provides Councillors guidance on the top initiatives that Cardinia Shire Council will actively promote throughout the 2022 Victoria State election campaign.

To support the overall advocacy activities, the Councillors will be encouraged to distribute the attached pack to their networks.

### Background

The objective of this advocacy pack is to increase awareness of and provide support for the Cardinia Calls For... advocacy campaign plan.

With the assistance of the appropriate line Managers, the projects in this pack have been confirmed.

The Coordinator for Communications and Engagement has given approval for both the layout and the text.

### Policy Implications

This advocacy pack has been designed to support the requirement of the advocacy framework.

### Relevance to Council Plan

#### 2.1 We support the creation of liveable spaces and places

2.1.1 Advocate, plan for and deliver accessible community infrastructure and services that address community need.

2.1.4 Advocate for increased and more-connected public transport options.

### Climate Emergency Consideration

There is no climate emergency consideration as part of this report.

### **Consultation/Communication**

All relevant line managers and the Communications and Engagement Coordinator were involved in the formulation of this advocacy pack.

### **Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment is not required as part of this report,

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

Additional budget is not required in delivering the advocacy pack.

### **Conclusion**

It is respectfully requested that Councillors endorse the Advocacy pack and note the Interface Councils (IFC) advocacy priorities.

# Cardinia Calls For...



**Better public transport**

**Better mental health services**

**Better access to jobs**

**Better, safer roads**

**Better sport and recreation**

**Better community places and services**

**Better outdoor spaces**

**Better protection for our environment**



**Cardinia Shire is situated on the south-east boundary of the Metropolitan Melbourne area.**

**It is geographically large and rich in natural assets spanning from the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges to the rich agricultural land of our Southern Rural area neighbouring Westernport Bay.**

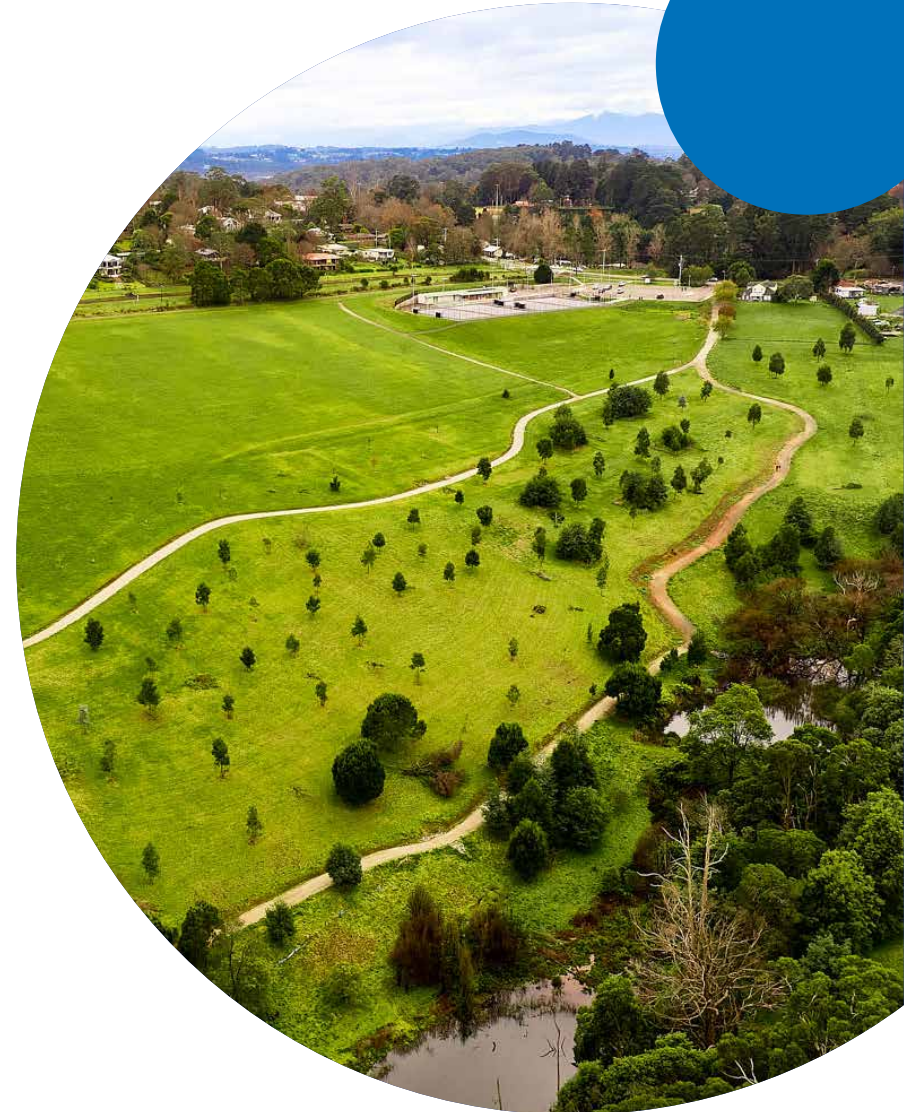
**Cardinia Shire is well known for its unprecedented growth. This is due to increased housing development providing affordable options for first-home buyers and downsizers alike.**

**Our urban areas of Beaconsfield, Pakenham and Officer and our railway towns of Nar Nar Goon, Tynong, Garfield and Bunyip provide a mix of metropolitan areas and traditional country towns.**

**These areas support affordable living and are close to essential services and facilities. They are located near emerging employment areas that deliver a diverse mix of jobs to the shire and access to the metropolitan rail service and V-Line services to regional Victoria - but our shire is so much more varied than just a growth area.**

**Our hills area sits at the Dandenong Ranges' foothills and is home to country charm villages, including Emerald, Gembrook, Cockatoo and Upper Beaconsfield. The hills offer unique lifestyle living, rolling farmland, adventure, beautiful landscape to explore and local cuisine to enjoy.**

**Our southern rural area has rich, productive landscapes that support local farming, food production and rural living across our townships, including Koo Wee Rup and Lang Lang.**





**118 194 people** call Cardinia Shire home



**3 new families** move into the area daily



Almost half our population **lives in Pakenham**

**14,708**  
to  
**34,221**

**Officer will more than double** over the next 10 years



Our population has **grown 22% since 2016**

**150,000**  
people

Population will grow to **154,741** by 2026

**200,000**  
people

Population will reach **more than 200,000** by 2041



The top 5 industries by employer in Cardinia Shire are:

1.  **Construction**
2.  **Retail trade**
3.  **Education**
4.  **Training**
5.  **Agriculture, forestry, fishing.**



**9,559**

In 2021 there were 9,559 registered businesses in Cardinia, an increase of 662 since 2020.



The job-to-resident ratio for the area in 2019-20 was 0.52, meaning there were fewer jobs than resident workers.

Almost 70% of Cardinia Shire residents must leave the area for work, causing issues with traffic congestion and road safety with lengthy delays on our major arterial roads, the Princes Highway and the Monash (M1).

On a regional level, the south east boasts more than 470,000 jobs, but more than 232,000 people leave the region daily to go to work.

88% of our residents own at least 1 car, and 75% of our resident's travel to work by car compared to 66% of Victorians.



**Our Council's major challenge is to balance the need for services, facilities, and other infrastructure for the growth area with the needs of our existing rural communities.**

**Our advocacy priorities look at these issues and outline the essential priority projects and initiatives that will support our community to foster and grow, providing opportunities closer to home.**

**Each project has a considerable, wide-reaching economic and social benefit. Providing all levels of Government with the opportunity to make investments, that matter, investments that will help our community to connect to local employment opportunities and social exchange.**

**Our vision for the future as outlined in our Council Plan is to strengthen the unique identity of the wonderful shire so many people now call home.**

**We will do this by, meeting the challenges we face united with our community and balancing our focus between the needs of our people, businesses, productive land, and natural environments.**



# Melbourne South East Airport

## Cardinia calls for investment to create an airport in Melbourne's south east.

Smart and timely decisions on critical infrastructure are needed now.

The case for Melbourne's South East Airport was identified in Victoria's metropolitan planning strategy, Plan Melbourne, to help rebalance growth between Melbourne and regional Victoria and ensure a more liveable and connected state and city that's globally competitive.

The South East Airport will reduce the need for cross-city travel, ease congestion for the city centre, and fully utilise existing road and rail assets.

The South East Airport will provide a closer air travel option for more than 2 million Victorians, develop thousands of new industries and jobs in Melbourne's south east, and ensure Australia's largest cluster of food and manufacturing industries remains globally competitive.

### We're calling for:

#### Stage 1 Total: \$6.8 million

\$1.2M - Undertake a feasibility study

\$5M - Development of a land side infrastructure business case

\$600K - Project management and governance to support multi agency coordination over 3 years

#### Stage 2 Total: \$500K

\$500K -Development of a South East Airport Master Plan



# Better, safer roads

**Cardinia calls for projects to get you home safely and reduce congestion on our roads.**

Rapid population growth is leading to record car ownership and increased pressure on the local transport network, gridlocking traffic and slowing down commutes through and within our region.

We need roads projects that will alleviate congestion and improve safety and liveability for our community.



## The Safer Roads Package

### **M1 Princes Highway project - \$850 million**

The missing piece of the 'National Highway'. Four highway-grade separated interchanges from Nar Nar Goon to Longwarry.

### **Lang Lang truck bypass project - \$50 million**

Diverting sand trucks away from schools and pedestrian crossings and town centre activity.

### **Racecourse Road duplication project - \$60 million**

Duplication of Racecourse Road from Princes Highway to Henry Street.

### **Ryan Road upgrade project - \$17.3 million**

Road upgrades to provide a safe point of entry to the new Pakenham East train station.

### **McGregor Road duplication project - \$5 million**

In conjunction with the Level Crossing Removal Project, the duplication of McGregor Road and the installation of traffic signals at Henty Street intersection.

### **Princes Highway intersection upgrades - \$25.2 million**

Upgrade Princes Highway intersections at Brunt Road, Arena Parade and McMullen Road.

### **Princes Highway/Toomuc Valley Road intersections - \$5.75 million**

Intersection upgrade including traffic signals to improve safety and congestion.

### **Salisbury/Beaconsfield-Emerald Road intersection design project - \$500,000**

Intersection upgrade project.

## Future Links package

### We're calling for:

- Officer South interchange to Princes Highway
- Ballarto Road - Clyde Rd to Bayles road duplication
- Monash Freeway to Koo Wee Rup Rd Northern Freeway link to Koo Wee Rup Bypass



# Better sport and recreation

## Cardinia calls for sporting and recreation facilities that cater for growing needs.

Good sport, recreation and leisure opportunities add to the culture, lifestyle and character of the region and play an important part in a well-balanced lifestyle.

We welcome funding support that will benefit social inclusion, physical activity and community connectedness through the provision of fit-for-purpose, future-proofed sport and recreation facilities and projects.



## Cardinia Life redevelopment

Cardinia Life, our premier aquatic and leisure facility, was built in 2006.

Cardinia Life must continue to provide the facilities, programs and services that meet the needs of our growing community, now and into the future.

The centre is a vital and much-loved part of our community – and has been for more than 16 years. Our community needs us to keep it that way!

Population growth and increased use means the centre has reached its capacity. The redevelopment will deliver exponential economic, health and social benefits to the community and strengthen its position as a valued community asset.

**We're calling for:**

**\$114 million to redevelop Cardinia Life**



## Active Cardinia package

### We're calling for:

#### **Cora Lynn Football pavilion upgrade - \$1.8 million**

A pavilion upgrade with female friendly facilities.

#### **Lang Lang Soccer new pitches - \$10 million**

Two new Soccer pitches at Lang Lang recreation reserve.

#### **Upper Beaconsfield Recreation Reserve community, sport, and scout facility upgrade - \$9.5 million**

New amenities, including a community pavilion with accessible restrooms.

#### **Beaconsfield Tennis Club court resurfacing, lighting, and fencing upgrade - \$450,000**

Court resurfacing works to two courts. A lighting upgrade, including pole replacement and a fence upgrade.

#### **IYU Regional Athletics track pavilion - \$7.5 million**

A new regional athletics Pavilion.

#### **Officer Tennis Club parking, paths, and amenities upgrade - \$350,000**

Accessibility upgrades including a modular bathroom.

#### **Emerald Tennis pavilion upgrade - \$1 million**

Renewal of pavilion and provision of accessible changerooms.





# Better access to jobs

## Cardinia calls for investment to drive economic recovery and jobs.

Cardinia calls for investment that will drive economic recovery, generate new activity, boost employment growth, and improve productivity and create jobs – where we live.

Almost 70% of our residents leave the area for work, causing issues with traffic congestion and road safety leading to delays on all our major arterial roads.

Our economy needs support to remain competitive, attract investment, stimulate trade, and increase the number of people visiting our shire. We want to work with all levels of government to stimulate economic growth, provide jobs, build industries, and create a more prosperous shire well into the future.



# Thompsons Road upgrade project

**We're working with the City of Casey, and together we're calling for the upgrade and extension of Thompsons Road from Berwick-Cranbourne Road in Clyde to Koo Wee Rup Road, in Pakenham.**

This project will ease traffic congestion and provide an alternate east-west route to the Monash Freeway. This will unlock access to thousands of local jobs.

It will help to relieve major regional connections, change travel demands and enhance liveability of the region by attracting business and investment.

It will also improve access to employment by facilitating timely development and connections to employment land in Cranbourne North, Clyde North, Clyde, Officer South, Cardinia Road Employment Precinct and Pakenham, a precinct that is home to about 100,000 regional jobs.

The Victorian State Government has completed a business case to investigate this project and we are now calling on them to deliver it.



## We're calling for:

The upgrade and extension of Thompsons Road.

## Project Details

### Stage 1:

Berwick-Cranbourne Road to Cardinia Road and Cardinia Creek bridge  
Upgrade and construct second carriageway from Berwick-Cranbourne Road to Cardinia Creek.  
Construction of four lane road and bridge over Cardinia Creek providing the critical link between City of Casey and Cardinia Shire.  
Construction of new four lane road with bike lanes and footpath connections from Cardinia Creek to Cardinia Road.

### Stage 2:

Cardinia Road to McGregor Road  
Construction of four lane road with bike lanes and footpath connections on both sides.

### Stage 3:

McGregor Road to Koo Wee Rup Road  
Upgrade and duplicate road to include second carriageway, bike and footpath connections.



# Better public transport

## Cardinia calls for integrated, well planned public transport.

Public transport is vital to local communities, supporting access to essential health, education and professional services, transporting workers to and from jobs, and bringing visitors to our region.

However, public transport does not always provide the support our rapidly growing community needs.

Current service timetabling fails to provide good connection between routes and enough frequency, significantly impacting smaller towns and communities accessing larger centres.

Local bus routes have not adequately kept pace with development, and a township bus route review is critically overdue.

Further government investment in a number of important projects is needed to reduce the community's reliance on vehicle use.



## Better buses package

### We're calling for:

An integrated transport strategy that will future-proof the connectivity of our bus services.

We need funding to improve and upgrade key bus connection services right across the shire.

### Vital connections that need immediate action include:

- increased frequency for Service 838 - Emerald to Fountain Gate Shopping Centre via Beaconsfield and Berwick
- increased frequency for Service 840 - Pakenham to Gembrook
- increased frequency for Regional Service - Pakenham to Koo Wee Rup, which also requires a timetable adjustment so that it connects with the Pakenham train line
- new routes and extra stops Service 928 - Pakenham station to Cardinia station
- new routes and extra stops for Service 925 - Pakenham station to Lakeside via The Avenue
- the 981 NightRider to travel all the way to Pakenham
- more buses to service our new and old estates in Pakenham Officer and Lang Lang.



# Better mental health services

## Cardinia calls for better access to mental health services.

We need services closer to home – to address a critical lack of available and affordable mental health services locally.

The heart of the problem lies in insufficient community-based services for individuals and families.

There is not much available between a general practitioner and the emergency department – ‘the missing middle’.

We need large-scale investment in ‘the missing middle’. This will take pressure off emergency departments and keep more people safe, well, out of jail, supported, employed, and housed in the community.

Adult mental health centres are part of the solution.

Rapid population growth is placing significant strain on health and community services, so all levels of government must collaborate to strategically plan the right services in the right places, at the right time.



## Healthy community package

While Council plays an important role in coordinating local public health planning, we require a collective approach and investment from other levels of government to improve the liveability, health, and wellbeing of all Cardinia residents.

We'd welcome continued support and funding commitments for mental health services to give our community more opportunities to seek and receive support – when and where they need it

### We're calling for:

Adult and older adult mental health services, with a centre located in our shire providing outreach services to our remote townships.

Infant, child and youth mental health services available at a wellbeing centre located in our shire.



# Better protection for our environment

## Cardinia calls for support for our natural assets and biodiversity.

Cardinia calls for investment that will support our natural assets and improve the biodiversity of our Shire.

At Cardinia, we are committed to doing better by our environment and have several full costed and adopted plans to help our environment thrive.

It's important all levels of government work together to build resilience to climate change and natural hazards, enhance green spaces and habitat links, support our communities to live sustainably, and champion sustainable development and waste management practices.





## Improving our environment package

### We're calling for:

#### **Heritage protection and preservation projects - \$500,000**

Provide the framework for heritage planning in Cardinia Shire for the next decade.

#### **Weed management program - \$1.238 million**

Assist our council in carrying out thorough weed mapping to protect our environment.

#### **Pest animal management and controls - \$420,000**

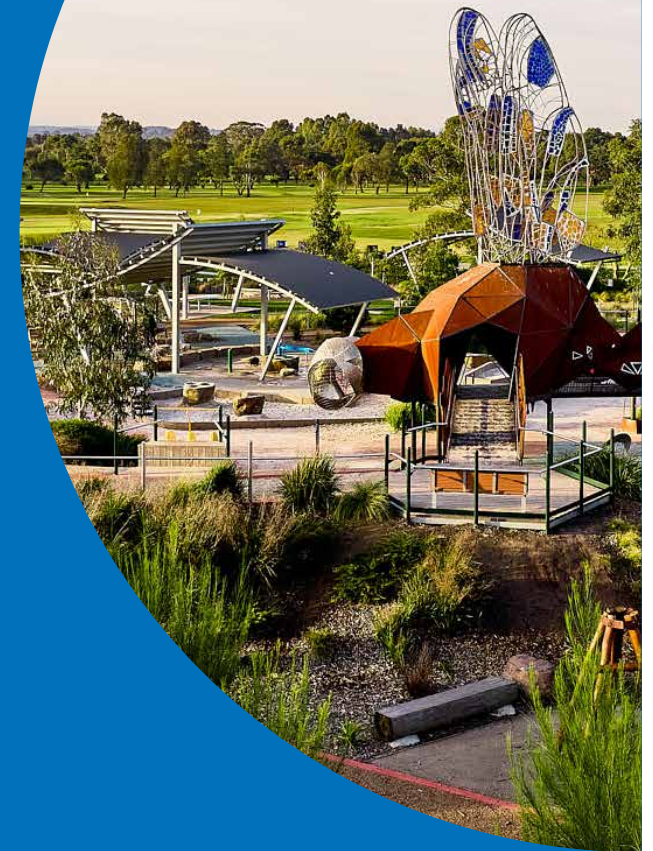
Seeking to improve the local habitat and biodiversity for native species. This project will support council to undertake essential pest animal management works.

#### **Illegally dumped rubbish - \$600,000**

Helping to make our shire a cleaner and safer place through litter prevention strategies, community engagement, and CCTV cameras.

#### **Biolinks Project - \$6.828 million**

Designed to protect the Southern Brown Bandicoot by implementing a suite of environmental works in the Koo Wee Rup area.



# Better outdoor spaces

## Cardinia calls for outdoor spaces for activities, play and relaxation.

Cardinia calls for engaging and exciting outdoor spaces that support our community to socialise, be active, play and relax.

We understand the importance of inclusive and welcoming open spaces, and the positive benefits they have on the overall health and wellbeing of our community.

Our open spaces need to be safe, convenient and accessible and offer different recreational, sporting, relaxation and wellbeing activities for a range of community needs.

Public play spaces and playgrounds provide opportunities for people of all ages to engage in physical activity, enjoy the outdoors, have fun and interact with others.



## We're calling for:

### **Emerald Lake Park Precinct upgrade - \$10 million**

This upgrade will help create better waterplay and regional playspaces, improve community gathering and event spaces and provide better accessibility and shared trail connectivity.

### **Jim Parks Reserve, Beaconsfield upgrade and playspace – \$553,800**

This upgrade will create better walking spaces, shelter and a neighbourhood level play space.

### **Koolangarra Park, Bunyip upgrade and playspace - \$2 million**

This upgrade will create better walking paths, with an upgraded play space and accessible bathrooms.

### **Alma Treloar Reserve amphitheatre project - \$390 000**

This project will upgrade the amphitheatre and improve access.

### **PB Ronald Reserve upgrade project - \$7.7 million**

This project will upgrade the existing skate park and other sport and recreation facilities, replace and upgrade picnic areas, improve pathways and create a new event space.



# Better community places and services

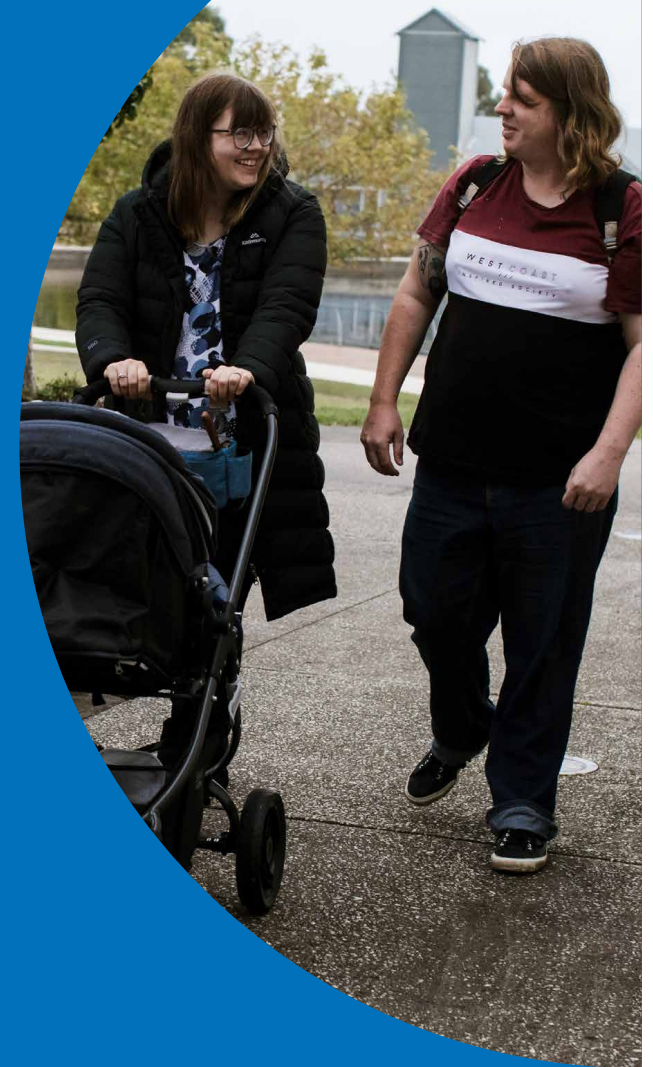
## Cardinia calls for funding to support local community places, programs and services.

Cardinia calls for investment into local community places and services to improve support for individuals and families.

Our population growth continues to make it challenging to provide critical services and assets in a timely way.

Cardinia is also experiencing one of the largest increases in new communities from non-English speaking countries in the state.

We have high rates of reported incidents of family violence, with 4 incidents reported across the shire each day. We need support for projects that build feelings of safety and inclusion for everyone.



## We're calling for a funding boost for our:

- Financial and resilience support services, and
- Homelessness and housing support services

### Community pride package

#### We're calling for:

#### Accessible places - \$370,000

This funding boost will support council to deliver a detailed accessibility audit of council buildings.

#### Community safety initiative (mobile CCTV program) - \$500, 000

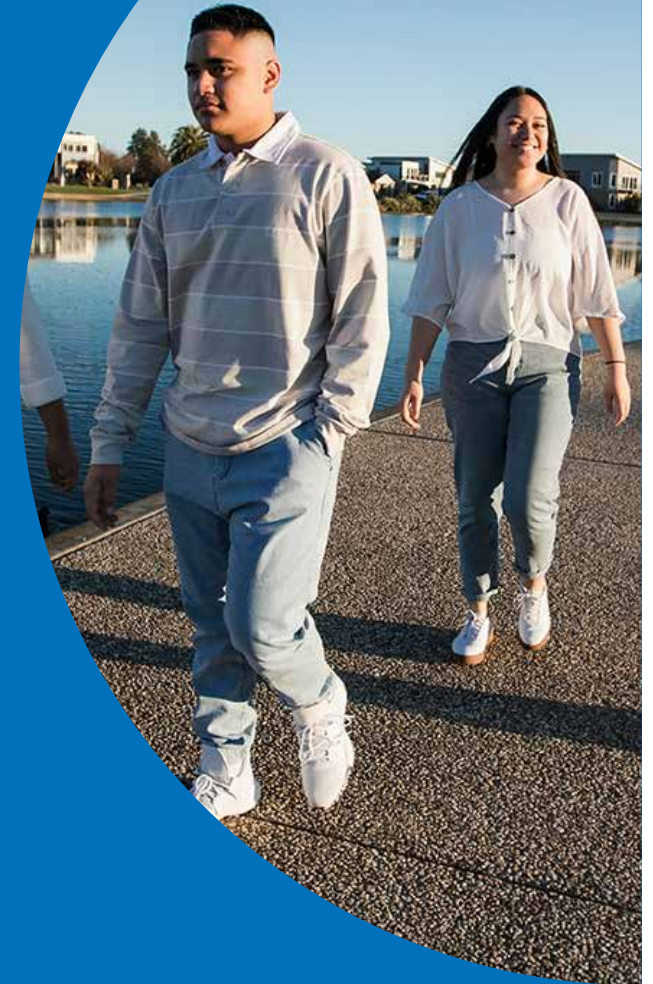
This project will contribute to the safety of our community by monitoring specific crime hotspots and enabling a collaboration approach with Victoria.

#### Community Information and Multicultural Hub - \$32.5 million

This project will deliver community information and multicultural hub in the community.

#### Pakenham Revitalisation project - \$10 million

This project will support early works to revitalise the Pakenham activity centre.



# Cardinia Calls For...





*Creating liveable communities in Melbourne's outer suburbs*

# INTERFACE WEEK 2022

*A Pathway Towards Building Stronger Communities*

*August 2022*



Interface Councils comprises Cardinia Shire Council, City of Casey, Hume City Council, Melton City Council, Mitchell Shire Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, City of Whittlesea, Wyndham City Council and Yarra Ranges Shire Council.

## Contents

BACKGROUND .....	3
<b>2022 PRIORITIES</b> .....	5
GROWING SUBURBS FUND .....	5
MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH SERVICES.....	7
KINDERGARTEN .....	10
YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH .....	12
TRANSPORT .....	14
COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE.....	16
LAND USE AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING .....	19



## BACKGROUND

**Interface Week 2022** provides an important opportunity for representatives of the Interface Councils – Mitchell, Hume, Wyndham, Melton, Whittlesea, Nillumbik, Yarra Range, Casey, Cardinia, and Mornington Peninsula – to meet with portfolio holders to outline our priorities for the 2022 election year.

We are committed to working with all levels of government, and strongly support a whole-of-government approach to managing and responding to the complex challenges posed by the pandemic, ongoing shocks, and stressors such as concerns due to growing population numbers.

The Interface Councils (IFC) has established several partnerships with state government departments and agencies over recent years which have resulted in some positive outcomes, including an increase in new schools, the co-location of educational facilities, increases in road funding and alignment on arterial road priorities.

In 2017, the IFC released its Liveability Snapshot which confirmed that communities in Melbourne's outer suburbs don't enjoy the same standard of liveability as other Victorians across a significant number of indicators. Many of the issues have been further highlighted by other reports such as Infrastructure Victoria's recent 2021-2051 Strategy.

Infrastructure Victoria's latest research, [Social infrastructure in Melbourne's growth areas](#) (October 2021) also indicates that population growth in many of the Interface Council areas is rapidly outstripping demand for vital social infrastructure such as libraries and aquatic centres.

The research points to the real risks of further widening the disadvantage gap between many newer and established suburbs and notes the opportunity for governments to work in partnership to ensure the timely delivery of co-located or integrated facilities that meet rapidly growing community needs and support Victoria's recovery from the pandemic.

The IFC is committed to working closely with policy makers to discuss solutions that would raise the liveability standards in Melbourne's outer suburbs to be more aligned with those in the rest of Victoria.

Interface Councils look forward to continuing to work with government to address key liveability issues revealed in the Liveability Snapshot including:

- More than 40 per cent of residents in the outer suburbs do not live near public transport.
- COVID job losses in the outer suburbs is the highest in the state, with jobs falling by 14.9 per cent.
- Local job provision in the outer suburbs is the lowest in Victoria with a self-sufficiency rate of 62.5 per cent, which is 30 per cent less than the state average.
- Almost one in five people travel more than two hours each day for work and the number of people who travel to work by car is almost three out of four workers, the highest in the state.

- Residents in the outer suburbs are reporting the highest levels of psychological stress and mortgage stress in the state yet have access to the lowest levels of GPs and allied health services per 1000 per people.
- The Walk Score® for grocery shopping is 33 per cent compared to all other areas in Melbourne, which score higher than 50 per cent.
- While the outer suburbs offer the highest levels of open space in the state, their access to these parks and reserves by foot is significantly limited.

This document provides background information on the issues that the IFC wants to highlight and prioritise as part of Interface Week 2022. These include:

- Coordinated land use and infrastructure planning.
- Improved roads, public transport and mobility.
- Community infrastructure.
- Maternal and child health services.
- Kindergartens and youth mental health.

## 2022 PRIORITIES

### GROWING SUBURBS FUND

#### Key request:

- **An annual and consistent funding commitment of \$75 million to the Growing Suburbs Fund to provide certainty for a significant pipeline of priority projects.**

Since its commencement in 2015, the Growing Suburbs Fund (GSF) has supported 299 projects across Melbourne's diverse and fast-growing outer Councils. During this period, the state government has allocated \$370 million of funding, representing over \$1 billion in infrastructure investment to support community infrastructure projects within Interface and peri-urban municipalities.

The GSF is an annual grants program managed by the state government's Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) open to 10 interface and 6 peri-urban Councils in Victoria. In the 2022-23 State Budget, the Victorian Government announced \$50 million in funding for the GSF. Except for the 2020-21 financial year, where two funding rounds were offered, \$50 million in annual funding for the GSF has remained consistent since the program's inception in 2015.

There are more than 1.6 million people in the Interface Councils Region (ICR), which is projected to grow at an average rate of 4% per annum until 2031. The 10 Interface Councils will see about 53% of Melbourne's population growth over the 2016-31 period.

In contrast, there are 200,000 people in the Peri Urban Group of Councils (PUGC), which is growing at an average rate of 2.5% per annum up until 2031.

The recent addition of the six Peri-Urban Councils' eligibility for the fund has significantly diluted the share the 10 Interface Councils can be allocated despite shouldering the majority of the population growth.

Since the GSF's introduction in 2015, the population of IFC Councils has increased by 23 percent (327,715 additional residents). During the same period, peri-urban councils saw an 18 percent population increase (35,420 additional residents).

In the five financial years from 2015/16 to 2019/20, IFC received an average of \$29.16 of Growing Suburbs funding per person. Since 2020/21, this has reduced by approximately 17 percent to \$24.23. The last funding round (2021/22) saw this figure reduced even further to \$19 per estimated population.

Since their involvement in the GSF (2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years), peri-urban Councils receive an average of \$70.72 per person. This is \$46.49 more per person than Interface Councils during the same period.

The power of the Growing Suburbs Fund is that it brings forward projects that are essential to growing communities that would otherwise not be built until years later. The original objective of the fund was to build essential community infrastructure more quickly than would otherwise be possible and support local community wellbeing.

The outcomes for IFC residents will be compromised if the early delivery of such services for emerging communities is limited by a lack of funding.

- For example, even if each Interface Council received the average allocation of \$3.5 million from the \$35.7 million allocated in the 2021-22 financial year, this would not adequately address the significant backlog of infrastructure projects that exist.

Further, Interface Councils believe there is growing inequity as the Peri-Urban Councils can also access rural funding programs.

- Despite being 90 per cent rural, Interface Councils (with the exception of Mitchell Shire) are not allowed to access rural funding programs.

Therefore, the fund needs to be increased to respectively accommodate the additional municipalities it is now required to serve or revert to a fund solely for the Interface Councils. The current funding arrangement does not adequately cater to the needs of growing communities.

IFC is seeking a total of \$75 million be made available annually under the GSF program. The IFC seeks to ensure the average funding available to its 10 member Councils is a minimum \$50 million, the average funding received in the six financial years prior to 2021/22.

### **The Context**

Historically, unprecedented growth and changing demographics in the outer suburban region have put increased pressure on services and infrastructure that have traditionally been underfunded.

There has been an inequitable provision of – and funding for – health and human services, local job provision and social disadvantage in the region.

While this is partially addressed by the GSF, there have been consistent oversubscriptions to the fund since its inception in 2015.

Further, the particular vulnerabilities unique to this grouping are amplified because of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing economic and social challenges.

In the current environment, it is even more important that the GSF be appropriately renewed to support local communities who need timely community infrastructure support the most.

Ultimately, the GSF is about much more than the infrastructure it delivers; it is essential to ensure the early delivery of community building and services and targets these four areas of social vulnerability:

- At risk youth
- Fragile families
- Poor health outcomes
- Isolated ageing

## MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH SERVICES

### Key requests:

- ➔ *Fund the Nurse Educator program providing a comprehensive work ready program for students undergoing clinical placements to support the transition of more midwives and nursing students into the sector, as well as supporting MCH staff who supervise students and graduates in the MCH centres. (Cost \$360,000 per Council over three years).*
- ➔ *Provide a Funding package to Interface Councils to employ a Social Worker and Family Violence Practitioner to work in their Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Service. (Costed at \$618,000 over three years for Mitchell Shire - specific needs across other IFC Councils may vary slightly from council to council).*
- ➔ *Fund an additional hour of service per child enrolled in the Universal Maternal and Child Health Service (COST: \$6.5 million over three years across the 10 IFC Councils).*

### Background

In October 2021, IFC published the *Maternal and Child Health Issues Paper* which outlined a series of pressing issues facing the current MCH system that directly impact on its delivery and compromise the level of service and care. These included a significant decrease in MCH workforce supply across the system, increasing demands on the Key Age and Stages (KAS) Assessments, an outdated Child Development Information System (CDIS) database, pressures due to burgeoning population growth across the growth area councils and outdated physical infrastructure and facilities.

The paper outlined how the COVID emergency brought further stresses to the system: a shortage of MCH-trained nurses to work across councils and burnout for existing MCH staff, a backlog of clients in need of face-to-face assessments after a period of conducting only telehealth appointments and a cohort of older children who have emerging developmental needs after missing out on assessments due to the prioritisation of newborn babies.

While many of the suggested program and policy reforms outlined in the paper require time to develop, like most of the current health system, there is a need to take urgent and immediate action to shore up support for MCH services. To that end, IFC Councils Whittlesea, Hume and Mitchell have formed a partnership to find some practical shorter-term solutions to address the current service challenges impacting on the provision of this service to communities across the Interface region.

**Pilot proposal 1: Funding a Collaborative MCH Nurse Educator**

The IFC discussion paper notes how the expansion of the MCH system has resulted in increased demand for MCH nurses and related professionals in an environment where there are not enough trained MCH nursing professionals to fill vacant positions. Councils face competing challenges in employing an existing ageing workforce that is nearing retirement and a younger workforce that is more likely to work part time and across multiple locations. Overall, there are a limited number of new MCH graduates every year across the State and not all enter the council MCH workforce system, with some working part time in hospital settings as Midwives.

Across the three councils of Whittlesea, Hume and Mitchell, it is estimated 45 per cent of the current MCH workforce are aged in the 'early retirement' or 'retirement' cohort of 51 + years, and one in three MCH staff aged under 40 are likely to be on maternity leave.

The sector currently relies upon midwives in the hospital sector to move into postgraduate study as the basis of the workforce growth. This sees a number of barriers – such as cost of the course, unpaid time during placement and local government constraints on how many students they can host each year – that prevent nursing students or midwives from becoming MCH nurses. At present, there are no significant interventions in place to address this service risk.

The pilot project would address these barriers by employing a nurse educator with costs shared by IFC Councils to support and oversee students transitioning into the practice.

***PROPOSAL: Fund the Nurse Educator program providing a comprehensive work ready program for students undergoing clinical placements to support the transition of more midwives and nursing students into the sector, as well as supporting MCH staff who supervise students and graduates in the MCH centres. (Cost \$360,000 per council over three years).***

**Pilot Proposal 2: Funding a multidisciplinary EMCH Workforce**

The need to increase the current inadequate level of funding for Enhanced Maternal and Child Health (EMCH) provision was also outlined in last year's discussion paper. EMCH services recognise the increased need for specialised support for many families with young children, which may include mental health services, family violence support, occupational therapy, and speech therapy.

Currently both Universal Maternal and Child Health (UMCH) and EMCH services across councils provide additional client support as there are fewer services to refer to within Interface Councils and long wait lists to access services. While councils currently receive additional funds for EMCH program (GCTC funding), the Universal MCH service does not receive additional funds but still supports many of these clients. EMCH services are also increasingly consumed by supporting clients trying to navigate the NDIS system as there is now a much longer and complex intake system.

As an example, currently EMCH funding received by Mitchell Shire Council is not adequate to allow the engagement of multidisciplinary roles into the program. Mitchell Shire has one of the highest rates of reported family violence, and with an expected population growth to be 299% of 0-5-year-olds over the next 20 years, family violence statistics are expected to increase. (ID Forecast Data, 2020).

The multidisciplinary approach provided by EMCH services allows staff to have immediate access to the necessary skills and expertise in providing a joint response, ensuring assessment, risk management, support and referrals are targeted and timely.

***PROPOSAL: A funding package is provided to each Interface Council to allow them to employ a Social Worker and Family Violence Practitioner to work in its Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Service. (Costed at \$618,000 over three years for Mitchel Shire - specific needs across other IFC Councils may vary slightly from Council to Council).***

### **Pilot Proposal 3: Increased house to KAS consultations**

The current allocation of 6.75 hours per 10 Key Age and Stages (KAS) consultations has not been reviewed for over 10 years and is no longer sufficient given the increased complexities experienced by families and the scope creep that has been occurring in relation to the KAS consultations. The expansion of issues and problems MCH staff are required to assess and respond to per consultation now includes incidence of family violence, mental health problems and financial burdens, equating to additional information gathering and reporting within a KAS consultation.

The pandemic placed further pressure on KAS consultations. For example, in 2020, there was a reduction in the number of children who attended for KAS visits at age of 18 months, two years and 3.5 years, as a directive of the first lockdown to prioritise younger babies, leading to non-identification of children with emerging developmental needs missing visits and not receiving an assessment prior to commencing kindergarten or school. This creates pressure across the early learning, school and kindergarten systems with increased numbers of children presenting with undiagnosed additional needs or developmental delays.

The KAS 45 project would see KAS visits increased to 45 minutes, equating to an extra hour of service per child. This would give parents more time in each consultation with a nurse, while nurses would be able to explore complex family issues and complete key assessments and legal requirements within the consultation.

***PROPOSAL: An additional hour of service per child enrolled in the Universal Maternal and Child Health Service (COST: \$6.5 million over three years across the 10 IFC Councils).***

## KINDERGARTEN

With the introduction of 30 hours of kindergarten, there are three key requests:

- *An increase in capital from the State – 30% on the existing commitments through Building Blocks Partnership Agreements, allow for land purchases where there will be shortfall due to new Policy.*
- *Increase in land allocations through the Victorian Planning Authority Precinct Structure Plan Process.*
- *Acceptance of a standard formula of 80% council, 20% private sector split for the delivery of kindergarten programs.*

### **Background:**

In 2022, the Victorian State Government announced the introduction of a new year of universal Pre-Prep for 4-year-old kindergarten, increasing from 15 hours to a 30-hour-a-week program of play-based learning for every four-year-old child in Victoria.

As major providers of kindergarten, local government will likely feel the greatest impact from this significant change. There are valid concerns about the availability of infrastructure, the availability of appropriate land allocation to support the increases required within the Precinct Structure Plan Process, funding to increase capacity or construct new infrastructure, and the availability and capacity of educators and staff.

The concurrent roll out of this proposed increase with the increasing hours for 3-year-old kindergarten only compounds these concerns. Local government needs a clear, coordinated voice calling for more information and detail, while also working to ensure that the sector's valid concerns are heard and rectified.

### **1. An increase in capital from the State – 30% on the existing commitments through Building Blocks Partnership Agreements, allow for land purchases where there will be shortfall due to the new Policy**

Rate capping presents a challenging environment for local government to balance the investment for kindergarten infrastructure and broader priorities identified by their community in respective Community Vision 2050 strategic documents.

Through the State Government's Building Blocks Partnership Agreement the allocated investment cannot go towards land purchase. There needs to be a mechanism through the Building Blocks Partnership Agreements on financial support to local government to enable the adequate purchasing of necessary land allocation to ensure this new policy can be a reality.

It also must be noted that within growth areas through the ICP/DCP framework there are fixed rate contributions from developers, and the State Government has and is failing to respond to the increase costs incurred by councils due largely to market variability, workforce shortages and supply chain issues.

The scale and resources required to deliver expanded kindergarten capacity across respective municipalities is considerable. An increase in both land, design and construction capital costs from the State is essential to enable sustainable Local Government commitment to the delivery of kindergarten infrastructure now and in the future.



## **2. Increase in land allocations through the Victorian Planning Authority Precinct Structure Plan Process**

The provision for new community infrastructure within new growth areas through the Victorian Planning Authority Precinct Structure Plan Process only considers and allots infrastructure requirements for 15 hours of four-year-old kindergarten. In existing Precinct Structure Plans, the additional demand from the State Government's announcement of the Three-year-old Reform (2019) and now Universal Pre-Prep for four-year-olds (2022) has not been further supported through the allotment of additional land for more kindergarten rooms and bigger kindergarten facilities.

Local government must now plan and diversify infrastructure stock through innovative design, multistorey options and land acquisition to manage the competing pressures to meet the diverse needs of the community across all life stages, as well as supporting the State Government in its ambitious overhaul of early childhood education and care sector.

## **3. Acceptance of a standard formula of 80% council, 20% private sector split for the delivery of kindergarten programs**

Within growth areas, there is an acceptance of a standard formula of 80% council, 20% private sector split for the delivery of kindergarten programs. This model is driven by the significant role local government plays as the backbone in providing kindergarten infrastructure, facilitating sessional programs (as early years managers or lease and license agreement) and understanding the community's demographics, and the expectation for local, accessible and affordable kindergarten.

The absence of community infrastructure and services in new communities presents specific challenges for building community resilience in growth areas.

The provision of 80% council, 20% private sector split to support the early delivery of new kindergarten infrastructure is critical in Growth Areas to ensure that existing services aren't reliant on a wait list system to manage capacity issues.

## YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Due to the lack of local service system to support young people at the Interface, IFC requests:

- ➔ *Each Council area is allocated \$500K brokerage funding to support local partnerships with the not-for-profit sector to deliver services to young people. This funding will assist to bring services historically based in inner-metropolitan areas into Interface areas or allow the limited services we have to expand.*
- ➔ *Change government policy to support the early delivery of secondary schools at the Interface. Current formula is three primary schools need to be on the ground prior to a secondary school being established. Secondary schools are a universal service and need to be there early in the infancy of new communities.*

### **Background:**

Specialist child and adolescent mental health services are provided for children and adolescents up to the age of 18 years. There are a number of services which work to support the mental health needs of young people including: community child and adolescent and adult mental health services, intensive outreach services, acute inpatient services, psychiatric disability, rehabilitation and support services and youth early psychosis services.

However, these services are historically based in inner-metropolitan areas. There are concerns that access pathways for children and young people living in the outer fringe of Melbourne and rural areas is being hampered by reliance on adults for transportation, cost and accessibility of public transport, out-of-hours support services and autonomy to access support when needed.

For example, the current experiences of children and young people living in Mitchell:

- No 'Early Intervention' services for young people with emerging mental health issues such as Anxiety, school avoidance, and self-harming in Mitchell Shire.
- Youth specific mental health services for complex issues are hard to access because they are between 40 – 120 kms away, during school hours, limited public transport, parents' unavailability.
- There are long waitlists up to 10 weeks.
- Lack of understanding navigating services.
- Fragmented service system.
- Delayed care due to the distance from headspace.
- COVID-19 has put added pressure on the local system that was already struggling.
- Barrier to service supports because of identified PCP area boundaries.
- Service gap in developmentally informed service delivery to young people.

Targeted social and emotional skill development is needed, to increase the individual protective factors for young people.

**Benefits of each council area being allocated \$500K brokerage funding to support local partnerships with the not-for-profit sector to deliver services to young people:**

- Increased service coordination between current youth mental health services.
- Increase in young people getting support to improve their mental health.
- Increase in young people receiving support via a local, outreach, youth specific service.
- Reduction of young people on waitlist for mental health services.
- Reduction in young people feeling overwhelmed by the pandemic.
- Increase in young people being connected to a youth service in their local area.
- Continuity of a vital and heavily relied upon service.

## TRANSPORT

### Key requests:

- *A funding commitment of \$50 million per annum to maintain undeclared Arterial Roads.*
- *A significant increase in investment in buses (recurrent funding) and other forms of public transport.*

### Reducing congestion

Over the next 10 years, according to Infrastructure Australia, congestion across Melbourne is expected to cost approximately \$10 billion per year.

The IFC is encouraged by last year's announcement of \$340 million for the first phase of a package of non- infrastructure measures to manage congestion on arterial roads – this will include technology, data and artificial intelligence. However, there is a need to continue beyond the first stage for benefits to flow to the outer suburbs.

Road capacity in the Interface Councils region has not kept up with rapid population growth and therefore the economic cost of road congestion is increasing.

Early delivery of infrastructure is vital. Transport infrastructure and services can significantly increase this cost over time.

Inadequate public transport services can also impede mobility and accessibility, and adversely impact on the environment by encouraging greater car dependence.

Early delivery of infrastructure in growth areas needs to be prioritised to enable diverse active transport options, such as paths and trails, to reduce car dependency.

There is a significant lack of integrated transport (servicing and route options) in the region. Transport challenges compound the lack of access to health and human services for residents.

In addition to the economic impact, regular and consistent traffic congestion has a negative impact on mental health and can lead to other issues such as poor health outcomes and family violence.

The social cost of inadequate transport is fundamental to recognise as congestion eats into time with family, friends and community.

**Public transport investment**

There is a critical lack of appropriate road infrastructure, strongly supported by the Victorian Auditor General's Office audit, Developing Transport Infrastructure and Services for Population Growth Areas in 2013. Public transport planning for new and emerging communities is urgently needed.

Bus and train frequency remain a major issue in the region, as is parking at train stations (noting there has been some recent state and federal funding to increase car parking) and adequate active transportation options to help people commute.

The group is encouraged by recent investments, but further funding is needed for public transport to bring the region up to Minimum Service Levels.

Interface Councils recommends that the bus network and service review process – flagged in the [Victorian Bus Plan](#) – commence in the Interface Councils region to ensure that outer suburban Melbourne has adequate bus routes and servicing linking to school/work times. This would improve the region's connectivity, the user's experience and decrease reliance on cars.

It is the most car-dependent region in the state. Just over 55% of Interface Councils residents live near public transport, which is nearly 40% lower when compared to middle and metro Melbourne.

The reluctance to use public transport since the start of the pandemic has exacerbated this issue in many Interface areas and despite an increase in working from home arrangements, congestion on our roads is worse than ever.

**Declaration of Arterial Roads**

Historically, there has not been an integrated approach to planning and delivering transport infrastructure in the Interface Councils region.

The group is seeking a renewed, clear and transparent process to support Councils with the declaration of arterial roads.

Clarity in relation to the triggers, process and timing of declarations is needed.

The IFC proposes a revised funding commitment to enable collaboration between Councils and the state to achieve better community outcomes from the declarations process.

The group recognises this process will need to be expanded to include the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), particularly regarding impacts on other urban and rural areas.

## COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

### Key requests:

- *Fund libraries and aquatic centres in growth areas.*
- *Increase funding to support local governments to plan and deliver libraries and aquatic recreation centres in Melbourne's seven growth area municipalities.*

Keeping up with the challenge of providing a range of infrastructure necessary to meet the community's needs is a challenge for all levels of government, and a particularly acute challenge in Melbourne's high-growth areas.

While governments have done much in recent years to close the gap – the lag between population growth and provision of the infrastructure and services needs to support them at levels consistent with Melbourne's settled inner and middle ring suburbs - there is a perennial need for more to be done.

The levels of government working together, most importantly the state and local governments, continues to provide the best path to identifying, planning, funding and delivering community infrastructure in a timely and effective manner.

For example, Infrastructure Victoria in its 2021 report [Social infrastructure in Melbourne's growth areas](#) specifically considered the needs in Melbourne's growth areas for the provision of libraries and aquatic centres to keep up with the demands of fast growing populations in our outer suburbs.

Infrastructure Victoria's [Social Infrastructure in Melbourne's Growth Areas](#) background report predicts that Casey, Cardinia, Hume, Melton, Wyndham, and Whittlesea will likely each need a new library in the next five years, and planning for a new library for Mitchell's growth areas should start now.

A new aquatic centre is likely to be required in each of Casey, Melton, Whittlesea and Wyndham in the next five years, and planning should start immediately for timely delivery of new aquatic centres in each of Cardinia, Hume, and Mitchell. (p.204)

In order to fund this the Infrastructure Victoria report recommends that:

- Each municipality should receive up to \$200,000 for aquatic centre planning and \$100,000 for library planning.
- The Victorian Government should fund up to one-third of the cost of new facilities, capped at \$20 million for aquatic centres and \$10 million for libraries, with councils to provide funding for the remaining capital costs and operational expenses. (p.204)

Development of an agreed funding model – a partnership between state and Interface Councils – for aquatic centres and libraries can also serve as an exemplar for developing similar arrangements between the two levels of government to enable provision of other types of local community infrastructure that require cooperation and investment.

## Shared community facilities

Provision of shared community facilities are critical to building strong communities in our outer suburbs. Well-designed libraries provide much more than just a library service, and aquatic centres are no longer just the local pool.

Planned and designed well, they are often the best place to house other community services, allowing for co-location of the array of health and wellbeing services that the state government and others are increasingly investing in.

In a similar vein, planning for new schools for growth areas should also be designed to cater for an integration of related services – kindergartens, maternal and child health and counselling services.

Integrated community facilities play a vital role in creating healthy liveable communities. They enhance wellbeing, build social support networks and provide resources for training, employment and personal development.

It is vital that co-located and or integrated community infrastructure encompasses a range of uses and broad community access.

The group warns that future community centres co-located with schools will need to include more than early years and kinder services in order to better serve communities.

Interface Councils would like all key partners to be more involved in the design and conceptualisation for schools. The importance of flexible and innovative design cannot be overstated. There is a need for multi-level considerations, universal community access to collocated facilities and design that supports future Joint Use Agreements and community use.

## Secondary School Planning

**Change government policy to support the early delivery of secondary schools at the Interface. Current formula is three primary schools need to be on the ground prior to a secondary school being established. Secondary schools are a universal service and need to be there early in the infancy of new communities.**

### Background:

IFC understands that the current approach to Primary and Secondary school provision in the growth areas relies upon a 3,000 and 10,000 dwelling consideration. This delivery trigger needs to be reviewed, as secondary schools are a universal service and need to be established early in the infancy of new communities. This presents several significant challenges with respect to planning for schools.

As an example, the projected average households in the Northern Growth Corridor (and current numbers in the southern portions of the corridor) are higher than expected meaning that a dwelling-based approach will under-deliver.

Mitchell Shire Council estimates that by 2041 this could result in a shortfall of around six primary schools and two to three secondary schools in Beveridge alone; this gap will increase as Beveridge continues to grow beyond 2041.

The early delivery of a secondary school acts as an anchor for the community and support our young people to develop resilience early in the community's development.

- The Victorian Government needs to prioritise the planning and early funded delivery of secondary school educational infrastructure in emerging communities, in order to avoid the costly, and often inadequate, retrofitting.
- Many emerging communities in greenfield developments in outer urban growth areas face substantial challenges related to place-making, community building and resilience.
- Young people in new and emerging communities, often suffer from a lack of extant infrastructure and services for many of their formative years. It is vital that educational services, along with transport and other basic infrastructure, is provided early and comprehensively. It is well researched, that the early delivery of infrastructure and services help to nurture a community, improve their resilience, future proof their liveability and promote placemaking.



## LAND USE AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

### Key request:

- *Establish one centralised authority with responsibility for state infrastructure and capital works planning for all of Victoria.*

### Background

The lack of statewide coordination and investment in capital works and service planning has long been at the heart of an inconsistent approach to Victoria's growing suburbs.

The lack of a coordinated approach to the funding, investment and delivery of state infrastructure has limited the ability to achieve far-reaching effective policy outcomes to meet the needs of fast-growing communities.

Growth corridors are commonly found in Melbourne's outer suburbs and peri-urban areas. For too long, these areas have not had the benefits of a sequenced approach to infrastructure investment meaning they have not kept pace with growth.

This has meant that aside from long standing postcode stigma, these areas are continually forced to wait longer for key infrastructure and services such as schools, transport, and hospitals. Without these fundamentals, liveability and the building of the fabric of local community will continue to lag growth.

The historically disjointed nature of the state's approach to infrastructure planning makes it difficult for local communities, their Councils and industry players to forecast how government will apply funding annually. In turn, this stymies the ability to make informed decisions leading to confusion, disappointment, and criticism.

In its [Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2021 – 2051](#), Infrastructure Victoria notes that:

*Fragmented decision-making, ambiguous responsibilities and undisclosed plans hinder integrated planning. Taking an isolated, sector by sector approach 'can lead to siloed planning and infrastructure decision-making, inconsistent outcomes, and unintended consequences for places and communities'*<sup>1</sup>

It also means opportunities to maximise value are eroded or lost before they begin. Land acquired early in the planning phase of growing areas for community use is almost always a lower cost. In fact, not only does cost escalate when these decisions are left late in the piece, choice of location and land size will often become limited as sites are realised for other purposes.

It's not clear that all parts of government with responsibility in these areas are willing to move at the same pace. They also do not always understand the obligations that arise for other parts of government from action and decision elsewhere in government.

For instance, the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) works to an ambitious program of Precinct Structure Plans (PSP) to ensure a consistent land supply available to meet demands for new housing.

It is not evident however, that other parts of Government, such as the Department of Transport are matching their infrastructure planning to the scope and timetable of the VPA's activities.

Neither the VPA or any other body within the State currently has any power or coordination role to drive complementary infrastructure planning by other departments and agencies within the State Government.

The lack of a legislative lever or committed synchronisation means parts of Melbourne's urban and peri-urban fringe are continually overlooked, despite their population significance. A change must be made.

### **What's needed - planning for success: The Victorian Growth Management Authority**

Given Melbourne's 10 Interface areas continue to experience rapid population growth, the Interface Councils Group is calling on the Victorian Government to establish one centralised authority with responsibility for state infrastructure and capital works planning for all of Victoria.

Its core functions would include improved liveability through land use planning, infrastructure and service planning and capital planning and decision making.

Improved coordination and transparency on all infrastructure planning will create a more harmonious community, improve social outcomes, sustainability and add measurable economic value.

This body should reside within one of the central agencies – Department of Premier and Cabinet or Department of Treasury and Finance – to ensure collaboration and a whole of government focus, and report to Cabinet at a senior level.

The scope of portfolio coverage ought to be universal – priorities to include transport, education and health, emergency services, community services and sport and recreation.

Long term planning, coupled with financial support and then action, with a single focused point of decision making would cut through individual agency and departments' timeframes. It would allow for a bird's eye view of what is needed, and when, across all the outer and peri urban areas.

Merging land use and infrastructure together would allow better timing of infrastructure delivery through sequencing of development in a way that provides the necessary scaling and certainty to inform investment decisions by both state and local governments.

The Authority would map out a forward program of works tailored to meet needs in a timely way that would feed into the State Government's budget processes.

Such a body could support and enable Infrastructure Victoria's recommendation that *'to better integrate land use and infrastructure planning, the Victorian Government should prepare and publish long-term statewide plans for priority infrastructure sectors in the next five years.'*<sup>ii</sup>

Planning for population growth is not a static exercise that can be undertaken in isolation. The Victorian Growth Management Authority would renew disparate plans currently across government. They could not only create a vision for places, spaces and communities but have the authority and expertise to bring it to life.

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/report/2-1-integrated-land-use-and-infrastructure-planning/>

<sup>ii</sup> Victoria's infrastructure strategy 2021 – 2051, Recommendation 32.

<https://www.infrastructurevictoria.com.au/report/2-1-integrated-land-use-and-infrastructure-planning/>