

Community Sustainability

Community and Public Transport Priorities

Context:

Poor Provision and Integration of Public Transport

The Whittlesea Strategic Transport Infrastructure Study, a joint project involving the former Department of Infrastructure (now Department of Transport), VicRoads and the City of Whittlesea, states that Whittlesea has inadequate public transport provisions and as a consequence, has poor land use/transport integration. It notes that because of these inadequacies, residents are heavily car dependent. Residents are disadvantaged by lack of transport options.

The strategy identifies a number of significant deficiencies in the existing public transport system including:

- Public transport to developing areas is lagging behind development.
- There are no east-west (orbital) bus services.
- The developing South Morang Activity Centre and the future Epping North area are not served by a high capacity public transport system.

The strategy recommends a number of priority public transport projects. They are presented as Public Transport Bus Priorities and Public Transport Rail Priorities.

Linking Melbourne: The Metropolitan Transport Plan 2002 and the *Meeting Our Transport Challenges Statement May 2006* reaffirm these views and identify transport requirements in the City of Whittlesea, including the expansion of local bus services and the upgrading of rail lines along key corridors.

In 2007, the former Department of Infrastructure undertook a 'Bus Service Review' for the municipality. The outcome of that review is a significant revamp of bus services in terms of coverage, span of operating hours and service frequency. Since then service improvements have been 'drip fed' to the Whittlesea community. The provision of this transport service continues to lag behind urban development, forcing families with already stressed household incomes to have to direct unnecessary expenditure towards motor vehicle transport costs.

Transport, in particular public and community transport, was raised as a community priority in the City of Whittlesea's 2008-2012 Community Plan consultation process.

The following Fact Sheets outline the priorities, which have been established to address these public and community transport needs.

Community Sustainability

Community and Public Transport Priorities

Fact Sheet: Walking & Cycling Pathways

Our Municipality

The City of Whittlesea is located 20km north of Melbourne. It is a large municipality covering an area of 490 square km of both urban and rural land and has a current population of over 134,000. The City includes the suburbs of Bundoora, Donnybrook, Doreen, Eden Park, Epping, Humevale, Kinglake West, Lalor, Mernda, Mill Park, South Morang, Thomastown and Whittlesea. The City of Whittlesea is a designated growth area and is experiencing a sustained period of rapid urban growth, particularly on the urban fringe. Since 2001 around 16,000 people have moved in to the municipality and over 9,500 extra dwellings have come on line. This growth is predicted to remain strong for the next 25 years or more with a projected increase in our population to 240,000 by 2031.

The municipality faces the distinctive challenges of balancing the dynamics of urban areas, rural areas, rapid growth, social disadvantage and high demand for services. The City has one of the most culturally diverse populations, with over 48% of residents coming from non-English speaking backgrounds. Whittlesea has also the fourth highest population of Indigenous people in metropolitan Melbourne. The City of Whittlesea is characterised by pockets of high socio-economic disadvantage, ranking the sixth most disadvantaged on the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage and the fourth most disadvantaged on the Index of Education and Occupation.

To accommodate this growth, diversity and high service demand, the City requires practical responses that balance community development, economic growth and environmental wellbeing. The Council believes this can only be achieved in partnership with the State and Federal Government.

Repeated State Government studies have found that the existing road network in the City of Whittlesea is characterised by deficiencies and discontinuities in arterial roads and limited connectivity to the Hume corridor as well as the discontinuous Metropolitan

Ring Road and rural roads in the north of the municipality.

The Need

Walking is the most popular form of recreation in Victoria but more importantly, it is the transport mode used by all travellers at the start and end of all trips. Walking and cycling are major elements in promoting physical activity for health, social connectedness and they are the most efficient and emission-free forms of transport. There is a strong demand to reduce household expenditure on transport, car dependence and reduce traffic congestion by encouraging the use of more sustainable transport modes and reduce greenhouse gas impacts.

The Whittlesea Community itself has identified walking, cycling and accessibility for the 2008-2012 Community Plan. All levels of Government are encouraging people to walk and cycle more and consequently, they are requiring that activity centres, suburbs, schools and public transport systems are designed to facilitate walking and cycling access.

Rising levels of obesity, climate change, the cost of petrol, making streets safer and the popularity of walking and cycling for recreation and other purposeful trips, have highlighted the many health, environmental, economic and social benefits of making places accessible to encourage people to walk and cycle more.

While the car is and will remain the dominant transport mode in Whittlesea, it is important to ensure that walking and cycling are given a high priority in State and local policy, planning and investment. A balance between providing for vehicles and providing for the needs of people who do or want to walk and ride for health, recreation, commuter and other trip specific purposes is required.

Council has developed a Walking Strategy and a Bicycle Network Plan to define the needs of the growing community, which highlight priorities and funding requirements.

The strategic development plans for the twin growth corridors of Epping North and South Morang-Mernda have identified the regional and local pathway links needed.

Developers are funding much of the local network but there are significant regional pathways that require State and Federal Government funding support.

Council itself contributed over \$900,000 in 2007/2008 to the municipal shared path network. In 2008/2009, Council is expected to allocate a further \$425,000.

Unless the State and Federal Government offers an immediate, concurrent commitment to the provision of the regional pathway network, the municipality will endure a disjointed and disconnected network.

The Proposal

To be able to provide the continuity and functionality expected by residents, Council is seeking the advanced construction of the regional pathway network to enable Council and developers to construct the local pathway network in accordance with the Walking Strategy and Bicycle Network Plan.

Cost

The cost of the entire off-road network, supporting the growth corridors with links to regional hamlets such as Beverage, Wollert, Eden Park and the Whittlesea township is expected to cost approximately \$14M. Developers will construct pathways to the value of approximately \$4.2M and Council will contribute approximately \$1M. \$8.8M is needed from the State and Federal Government for the regional portion of that network.

There are areas where the walking and cycling networks are needed immediately to facilitate existing latent demand and/or to foster and encourage existing demands.

The most significant of Council's high priority projects with preliminary costs include:

- Plenty Road on-road bicycle lanes from McKimmies Road to Centenary Drive in Mill Park (\$1.0M).
- South Morang Rail Trail from Epping Station to the planned site of the South Morang Rail Station at the Plenty Valley Town Centre (\$2.5M).
- Yan Yean Pipe track from the Metropolitan Ring Road at Dalton Road to Plenty Road at Gordons Road (\$2.5M).

State Government Policy Alignment

Linking Melbourne:

Strategy 1: A safer transport system

1.2 Improve safety and access for pedestrians and cyclists

"The Victorian Government aims to provide safer travel for pedestrians and cyclists, and to increase the number of people walking and cycling through improved management of existing road space and the provision of more off-road paths and access.

Meeting our Transport Challenges

Action 8 Promoting Smarter, Healthier Travel Choices

'Reducing reliance on cars requires more than the provision of a high quality public transport network. It also requires far-sighted urban and land use planning, making better use of existing transport infrastructure and providing more opportunities to take up walking and cycling through more bike paths and pedestrian friendly environments. Over 40 per cent of trips within the metropolitan area are less than 2kms and almost two-thirds are less than 5km. While there has been a 50 per cent increase in cycling to work between 1996 and 2001 and growth in walking around the CBD, more can be done to encourage further increases in these sustainable means of travel. "

Key Elements

\$135 million over 10 years to promote greater use of public transport and encourage more walking and cycling.

Extending and improving cycling and walking options.

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Fact Sheet: Community Transport Services

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Currently, families, children and young people in the City of Whittlesea are disadvantaged in relation to the provision of local human services. In addition, like other Interface Councils, local residents are geographically isolated from service centres and current service provision is not keeping pace with population growth and demand. Increased State Government investment in social infrastructure and program delivery is essential to achieve a basic level of service provision.

The Whittlesea Strategic Transport Infrastructure Study, a joint project involving the former Department of Infrastructure, VicRoads and the City of Whittlesea, found that Whittlesea has inadequate public transport provision. *Linking Melbourne: The Metropolitan Transport Plan 2002 and the Meeting Our Transport Challenges Statement*, reaffirm these views and identify transport requirements in the City of Whittlesea, including the expansion of local bus services and the upgrading of rail lines along key corridors.

The expansion of public and community transport infrastructure and services is a key strategic issue arising from the community consultation process undertaken for the 2008/2009 City of Whittlesea Community Plan. Such services will enhance community connectedness, health and wellbeing, increase employment, education and training opportunities and maximise access to services and facilities. They will also contribute to climate change through reduced greenhouse emissions.

The Need

Lack of access to adequate public transport is identified consistently as a major barrier to community participation and access to services across all age cohorts. Within the City of Whittlesea, transport disadvantage is significant for many vulnerable community members and impacts on the ability of services to engage with such isolated and disconnected individuals and families.

Access to essential services and social opportunities is also very limited for many people in the community because of the severe shortfall in their transport options, in particular extensive bus services, heavy and light rail installations as documented in the *Strategic Plan for Human Service Delivery in the City of Whittlesea*. This Plan highlights that "...the establishment and sustaining of a local community transport service is required as a core community resource for those who are disadvantaged by lack of access to transport options in attending medical and other appointments". See Fact Sheet: Heavy and Light Rail Services.

The Proposal

Whittlesea Community Connections and LINK Community Transport acknowledge their success in securing set up costs from the State Government for a locally based sustainable community transport service. This has provided a direct transport connection for Whittlesea's transport disadvantaged communities through a coordinated approach to community transport needs, enhancing community participation and access to services. However, because costs associated with coordination and operations (petrol and depreciation costs) have not been forthcoming, the funding shortfall is impacting detrimentally on the provision of this service.

Cost

Recurrent program funding estimated at \$110,000 per annum.

Recurrent costs

Community Transport Coordinator EFT	\$65,000
Operational Costs	\$45,000
Total recurrent costs per annum	\$110,000

State Government Policy Alignment

A Fairer Victoria:

Strategy 12: Building Stronger Communities

"The Government will continue to strengthen communities, investing \$75.2m to ... improve community transport services..."

Action 12.4: Provide more community buses

"Fund up to 55 new or replacement community buses and other vehicles..."

"Provide \$3m over three years to fund a further 25 general-purpose community buses to expand options for community transport in growth areas".

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Fact Sheet: Fixed Rail Extensions

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Fixed /Heavy Rail Extension Priorities

- Rail extension to Mernda: Stage 1 (from Epping to South Morang)
- Rail extension to Epping North: Stage 1 (from Epping to Cooper Street)
- Rail extension to Epping North: Stage 2 (from Cooper Street to Aurora)
- Rail extension to Mernda: Stage 2 (from South Morang to Mernda)

The Need

The community within the City of Whittlesea only has access to a single track, heavy rail service on the western side of the municipality. The walkable catchment of this rail service is very low with only 5% of households having convenient access to the service. This percentage is diminishing as urban growth expands in the northern residential areas of the City. Ultimately, only 2% of households will have access to heavy rail services unless the Epping North or Mernda rail extensions are built.

The extension of the rail line will enhance community connectedness, reduce social isolation, increase employment, education and training opportunities, maximize access to social and recreation opportunities, services and facilities for individuals and families. Provision of the rail extensions will also make important local contributions to climate change through reduced greenhouse emissions.

Proposal

The extension of the heavy rail service to Mernda can be managed in a staged process but the first stage is required urgently. With residential and commercial development underway in South Morang and the established suburb of Mill Park nearby, the Epping to South Morang rail extension is required now. The second stage from South Morang to Mernda has a short timeframe before becoming as urgent as the stage to South Morang. The second stage requires immediate pre-planning to ensure reservations and development infrastructure reflect the requirements of the rail service.

Similarly, the Epping North heavy rail extension needs to focus on the employment zone around Cooper Street in the short term. The design and construction of an extension from Lalor Station to Cooper Street should occur immediately to support the expanding Epping Plaza and the Northern Hospital precinct and the wider Epping Transit City. The second stage from Cooper Street to Aurora would follow to reflect residential growth. Pre-planning and land acquisition are currently underway.

The light rail service along Plenty Road extends only 2.5km into the municipality. With the lack of trams and buses for short trips on the eastern side of the municipality and no quality linkages between trams and trains, residents are forced to rely on private transport with inherent costs, additional family financial pressures and greenhouse implications.

The South Morang Activity Centre is planned as a major community facility serving much of the City of Whittlesea. The extension of the light rail service to this 'Transit City' transport node is important.

Early investment in rail infrastructure (heavy rail extension from Epping to South Morang) will achieve the following benefits¹:-

With respect to housing affordability -

- Increase development yield within the 10 minute drive catchment of the new station by up to 20% over the next 20 years.
- Enable developers to provide a significantly greater diversity of housing types, including more affordable housing on compact lots and in medium density housing forms, in accordance with Melbourne 2030 directions.
- Generate savings in total infrastructure costs to support urban development in the district of between 3% and 9%. In a competitive market, this would represent a saving to the end buyer of between \$9,000 and \$27,000 on a \$300,000 house and land package.
- Enable around 1,400 households to avoid having to purchase a second car, thereby generating further total cost savings of around \$30,000 in present value terms and a positive contribution to climate change.

With respect to environmental impacts:

- Save approximately 218 million vehicle kilometres per annum in car travel. This is the equivalent of taking 15,000 cars off the road.
- Save approximately \$700,000 per year in greenhouse gas emissions.
- Save some \$132 million per year in other travel externalities, including accidents, noise, air pollution and residential disruption.

¹ SGS Economics and Planning, Epping to South Morang Rail Extension, 2007

With respect to urban form impacts:

- Enable densities of around 50 persons per hectare to be achieved in and around the new Plenty Valley Town Centre. This would equate to an approximate population of 2,500, which is substantial enough to generate a sense of identity as a vibrant urban community.
- Open up land value and capture opportunities for public sector land-holders in the area.

With respect to economic impacts:

- Generate an annual increase in value added (total income) in the Northern Melbourne economy of approximately \$114 million per year, as a result of avoided costs and reinvestment of productive resources that will accompany reduced travel externalities.
- Create approximately 2,272 permanent jobs across the metropolitan economy.

Cost

Project cost subject to Department of Transport investigation and proposal.

State Government Policy Alignment**Linking Melbourne :**
Strategy 3.3 Improve access via the passenger rail network

“Improvements to the Clifton Hill Group” (with impacts on up-line Epping services).

“Investigation of proposed new station developments on existing lines in growth areas”.

“Reservation of the Epping North corridor for future public transport”.

“Detailed investigation and planning for the extension of the rail network to South Morang”.

A Fairer Victoria: Strong People, Strong Communities**A Fairer Victoria – The Continuing Commitment:**

‘.....Reducing barriers to opportunity with a sustained focus on identifying and redressing those factors that prevent people gaining access to opportunities for a better life. The effort this year is to assist more Victorians to overcome barriers to economic and social participation.’

Community Sustainability

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Fact Sheet: Bus Priority: Extension of Existing Bus Services

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The Bus Service Review completed in 2007 identified numerous route improvements for Whittlesea. Some of those recommendations have been implemented but many more are urgently needed.

Public Transport Bus Priorities

- Realignment of route coverage and expansion of existing services to Mill Park Lakes and South Morang, Epping North and Mernda / Doreen
- Increased number of services to Whittlesea Township.
- Increased frequency and operating hours of trunk services and some feeder services.

The Need

The growth of residential development beyond the existing fixed rail public transport services means that many residents do not have accessible public transport and must remain reliant on access to private cars.

While buses provide some services, most continue to travel on circuitous routes at low frequency over a

constrained spread of hours that collectively provide a disincentive to prospective bus commuters.

Consequently, the current services struggle to compete with the private car and significantly disadvantage those without access to cars, in particular people on fixed or low incomes, mothers with children and older people.

It forces families to consider purchasing an additional car or cars, exacerbating family economic pressures and contributing negatively to greenhouse emissions.

Currently approximately 5% of residents do not have any access to a car. This means that 7,000 current residents rely completely on public transport and a very high component of Whittlesea residents have purchased at least one car for mobility. The statistics for employment travel are worse with less than 1% of people using buses for work related trips and only 0.2% of this travel is for short trips within the municipality.

The Proposal

That the recommendations of the Bus Service review be implemented in their entirety as a matter of urgency.

Cost

Project cost to provide additional coverage to be estimated by the Department of Transport.

State Government Commitments and Policy Alignment

Linking Melbourne

Strategy 3: Metropolitan Growth

Strategy 3.1: Improve outer metropolitan arterial roads

“Through Smart Growth Committees (including the growth area of Whittlesea) determine the long term requirements for transport infrastructure and services in growth areas”.

Strategy 3.2: Increase access via public transport in middle and outer areas

“Deliver better bus services in areas of greatest need based on population levels and/or expected growth”.

“Establish closer working relationships with local government in the delivery and coordination of bus services”.

“Ensure new developments support local bus services”.

A Fairer Victoria

Action 12.3 Improve public transport

“Strengthen the links between communities with more flexible and frequent public transport services in growth areas”.

A Fairer Victoria: Strong People, Strong Communities

Priority Area Four: Developing Liveable Communities – Strengthening neighbourhoods and local communities

‘Building up communities’ assets make them better places to live and work, helping attract skilled labour and capital investment. These assets may be physical, such as transport.....Building local strength can be particularly important in places where there are...rapid growth and economic or social change. Integrating investment in community assets with smart planning is critical to these communities. We need to ensure that people are not disadvantaged because of where they live.’

Community Sustainability

Community and Public Transport Priorities

Fact Sheet: Light Rail Extension: Bundoora to South Morang Activity Centre

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Our Transport Challenges Statement, reaffirm these views and identifies transport requirements in the City of Whittlesea, including the expansion of local bus services and the upgrading of rail lines along key corridors.

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The Need

Much of the focus of public transport needs for the municipality has been directed towards extensions to the heavy rail network. Even with these improvements, a major gap in public transport provision occurs in the Bundoora-South Morang section of the Plenty Valley corridor. The establishment of University Hill, a high profile and innovative mixed-use precinct adjacent to the Bundoora campus of RMIT, provides a southern anchor to the South Morang Activity Centre which is also a mixed-use multi-modal Transit City. These 'northern' and 'southern' anchors complement each other in terms of balancing the potential for widespread service provision to the community in the eastern corridor.

The existing light rail service along the Plenty Road median extends only 2.5km into the municipality. With the lack of trams and buses for short trips on the eastern side of the municipality and no quality linkages between trams and trains, residents and many RMIT students are forced to rely on private transport with inherent costs, additional family financial pressures and greenhouse implications.

A light rail extension to the South Morang Activity Centre will enable residents along the corridor to access retail, employment, education, leisure and recreational services without the need to utilise private motor vehicle travel. This is particularly important for the RMIT student population and the young and elderly and people on low and fixed incomes.

In land use terms, the light rail extension will support the early expansion of the developable areas of South Morang at a faster rate. This then assists in establishing a non-car culture for many residents and supports the State Government's transport and environmental sustainability principles.

The Proposal

It is proposed to extend the existing double track light rail service within the Plenty Road central median from Bundoora to the South Morang Activity Centre.

Tram stop locations are flexible but can readily reflect the pedestrian access points from the adjacent residential estates. Pedestrian access points are spaced generally between 300 metres and 500 metres apart, complementing the typical desired tram stop spacing for optimum operational purposes.

Based on this scenario, eleven tram stops would be necessary to provide adequate accessibility.

Cost

Project cost subject to Department of Transport investigation and proposal.

State Government Policy Alignment:

Melbourne 2030 A Greener city Direction 7, Policy 7.6

Melbourne 2030 supports the goals of the air quality improvement plan by focusing on integrating transport and land use planning to improve transport accessibility and connections.

Better transport links Direction 8, Policy 8.

Upgrade and develop the Principal Public Transport Network to connect activity centres.....

Direction 8, Policy 8.3

Co-ordinate development of all transport modes to provide a comprehensive transport system.

A Fairer Victoria: Action 12.3 Improve public transport

"Strengthen the links between communities with more flexible and frequent public transport services in growth areas".

A Fairer Victoria: Strong People, Strong Communities Priority Area Four: Developing Liveable Communities – Strengthening neighbourhoods and local communities

'Building up communities' assets make them better places to live and work, helping attract skilled labour and capital investment. These assets may be physical, such as transport.....Building local strength can be particularly important in places where there are...rapid growth and economic or social change. Integrating investment in community assets with smart planning is critical to these communities. We need to ensure that people are not disadvantaged because of where they live.'

Community Sustainability Environmental Priorities

Fact Sheet: Improving the energy efficiency of street lights

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To accommodate this growth, diversity and high service demand, the City requires practical responses that balance community development, economic growth and environmental wellbeing.

Insufficient resources, because of inappropriate funding formulae, have failed to keep up with population growth resulting in a backlog of community infrastructure renewal and creation within both established and emerging communities.

Increased State and Federal Government investment in social infrastructure is essential to achieve a basic level of service provision.

The Need

Council committed to reducing its greenhouse emissions by 25% of 1999 levels by 2010. Streetlighting represents about 30% of Council emissions in 2005 and is one of the major sources of emissions from Council operations. Emissions from streetlighting are projected to surpass emissions from all buildings by 2010. Streetlighting therefore represents a major opportunity for cost savings and greenhouse gas emission reductions.

At the end of the 2007/08 year there were around 12,430 streetlights in Whittlesea which are maintained by the distribution businesses. The majority (8,213 or about 70%) of these lights use 80 Watt Mercury Vapour (MV) lamps which are an inefficient light source compared to new technology. Council is now in a position to consider an energy efficient replacement.

Council has a one in eight year opportunity in 2009/10 to leverage up to 50% of the project costs from the distribution business through the substitution of this project for the scheduled batch cycle replacement program.

Proposal

To replace all 80 Watt mercury vapour lamps with suitable energy efficient lamps and fittings during the scheduled bulk replacement program commencing in 2009/10.

Cost

The total cost of the project is estimated at \$2.8m, however during 2009/10 the estimated contribution from the distribution business peaks at \$1.4m. This leaves a remaining cost of \$1.4m. Council is seeking \$1.4M in Government contribution towards this project.

State Government Policy Alignment

Victorian Climate Change Program (formerly Victorian Greenhouse Strategy)

<http://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/>

Sustainable Public Lighting

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/DSE/nrence.nsf/LinkView/4C1EFFF267D2B0E0CA2574800011C1F87791A5F203C894104A2567CB00031088>

Community Sustainability Environmental Priorities

Fact Sheet: Stormwater Harvesting and Water Recycling for sportsground irrigation

Our Municipality

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To accommodate this growth, diversity and high service demand, the City requires practical responses that balance community development, economic growth and environmental wellbeing.

Insufficient resources, because of inappropriate funding formulae, have failed to keep up with population growth resulting in a backlog of community infrastructure renewal and creation within both established and emerging communities.

Increased State and Federal Government investment in social infrastructure is essential to achieve a basic level of service provision.

Increased role for water authorities to deliver alternative water supply projects

Council is advocating for greater State Government investment, via its water authorities and departments, in stormwater harvesting and water recycling projects for regional and local municipal sportsground irrigation.

It is requested that the Minister for Water consider changes to his Statement of Obligations, prepared under the (S4I) of the Victorian Water Industry Act 1994, so that Yarra Valley Water and Melbourne Water:

- (a) work with local governments, and the Department of Sustainability and Environment, to identify regional and local stormwater harvesting and water recycling projects for the irrigation of active open spaces and other uses
- (b) undertake technical and financial feasibility analysis with local governments of the identified projects, including management and cost plans; using social, economic and environmental assessments
- (c) develop a schedule of projects to be implemented and a works program for construction
- (d) either manage, or by negotiation with the local government, hand over the stormwater harvesting or water recycling project

This proposed amendment to the Statement of Obligations would give direction for the

implementation of a number of relevant State Government policies, and recommendations, including:

Securing Our Water Future Together: Victorian Government White Paper

‘We will use alternative water supplies for non-drinking uses where there is a net benefit to the urban community and to minimise detrimental discharges to the environment.’ Policy (Recycling and Alternative Water Supplies, p. 106)

Sustainable Water Strategy Central Region Action to 2055; Chapter 3 Securing Water Supplies

‘new targets for potable water substitution by recycling and stormwater reuse’ (Action 3.16)

‘The Government will set a target for the Growth Area Authority to promote water conservation and recycling in new development in the growth areas of Melbourne’ (Action 3.18)

Operating Charter for Waterway management in the Port Phillip & Westernport region (2008 – draft)
Melbourne Water

Part 7.3 Managing Environmental Flows
‘developing a program to identify and quantify opportunities for sustainable harvesting of urban stormwater’

Water Ways: Inquiry into Reform of the Metropolitan Retail Water Sector (2008) Victorian Competition & Efficiency Commission

‘That for each pricing period the Government specify in the statement of obligations the quantifiable outcomes that it expects the retailers to achieve’ Recommendation 7.1.

City of Whittlesea current water supply projects

The City of Whittlesea is actively planning several regional and local stormwater and recycled water supply projects for sportsground irrigation. The stormwater harvesting schemes would result in Council becoming a supplier and manager of its own

water resources. With this comes additional costs and responsibilities that Council is not currently equipped to meet.

These projects are made difficult because of high capital investment costs, and the complexity of working with multiple land owners and managers, and regulations.

The major alternative water supply projects currently being planned are:

Harvest Home Epping Recycled Water Scheme

Council has worked with Yarra Valley Water to develop options to extend pipelines from the YVW’s Aurora Class A recycled water treatment plant to a number of sporting grounds in the Epping North area, including Epping Soccer Stadium, Epping Reserve (2), Casa D’Abruzzo (2), Duffy Street Reserve, Harvest Home Pitches 1&2, and local schools. This would result in the annual saving of 33 ML of potable water.

Council is currently in work with Yarra Valley Water on pipeline routes and associated options to build the pipeline through Epping North, and an equitable funding model for these works.

Other longer-term options include extending a pipeline from the Aurora Class A holding tanks located Quarry Hill, to irrigate the Mill Park Lakes Ovals (2), Hillsvieview Reserves (2), Meadow Glen Stadium Infield, and Meadow Glen Soccer. This would result in an annual saving of 29 ML of potable water.

Mernda Managed Aquifer Recharge Stormwater Harvesting Scheme

Council, Stockland and the Department of Sustainability and Environment have undertaken significant investigations into the Mernda Managed Aquifer Recharge Scheme to supply stormwater to the Mernda-Doreen growth area future regional recreation centre ovals. Funding from the Stormwater and Urban Water Conservation Fund helped with the trial injection and extraction of stormwater, which has proved successful. An

annual supply of 25 ML from one bore is possible.

For Council this scheme presents a major organisational, capital and ongoing maintenance commitment. The active participation of a water authority would greatly assist the scheme.

Melbourne Wholesale Market/Mosaic Living (Lalor) Stormwater Harvesting Scheme

Council is working with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, together with the private developers ABAH Group of the Mosaic Living and CedarWoods of Carlingford estate, to develop a stormwater harvesting scheme to irrigate the future ovals in Lalor (Mosaic Living estate) and other Council reserves with stormwater harvested from the Melbourne Wholesale Market site. Negotiations are ongoing.

Other projects under consideration and planning

1. The Mushroom Exchange farm in Mernda. This mushroom farm produces a large volume of waste water and has commissioned engineering investigations into on-site reuse and recycling options. Council has been having discussion with Mushroom Exchange engineers and water management consultants about adding a capacity to produce recycled water to irrigate Council sporting grounds in Mernda.
2. Thomastown Recreation Aquatic Centre greywater recycling and Main Street Reserve irrigation. Council is ensuring that access to greywater (shower and hand basin) and backwash waste water is engineered into the redeveloped TRAC, so that at a future time an on-site greywater recycling scheme can be added to the facility to provide water to irrigate the adjacent Main Street Reserve's ovals.
3. The City of Whittlesea has produced a model detailing options for the provision of alternate water sources to service many Council sporting ovals, and strategic options to secure alternate water sources for the many ovals planned for construction in association with new developments within Whittlesea's growth corridors.

City of Whittlesea impact of water restrictions

The City of Whittlesea's 2006 Sustainable Water Use Plan set ambitious goals to reduce relative potable water use by 25% by 2015 and 50% by 2030, based on 2001 usage. To achieve this a significant proportion of current and future sporting fields will need to be irrigated with sustainable, alternative water supplies (potable substitution).

Since the introduction of the Stage 3 water restrictions in January 2007, the community and social benefits of alternative water supplies and making grounds available for full use during water restrictions have become apparent.

The lack of water for irrigation presents a particular problem for the sporting field assets within the City of Whittlesea. Without regular irrigation these heavy clay soils over basaltic rock heave and crack open making them unsafe to play on. Under these dry conditions the turf is highly prone to compaction damage and once destroyed is very expensive (around \$100,000) to re-establish.

Council has invested \$740,000 in the construction of the Harvest Home Road synthetic soccer pitch, which was open for use July 2008. The pitch features the latest development in synthetic yarns and has been laboratory tested to a two star FIFA grading.

Investment in alternative water supplies to irrigate regional and local municipal sporting grounds would make a major contribution to the social, environmental and economic wellbeing across Melbourne, including the City of Whittlesea. Council would welcome the opportunity to develop the proposals outlined in this advocacy strategy further.

Community Sustainability Environmental Priorities

Fact Sheet: The Green Wedge Land Management and Farming

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The Need

Property values in green wedge areas have increased at a significantly greater rate than the financial return from rural enterprises. This situation disadvantages both traditional and non-traditional farming properties in green wedge areas, as the property valuations bear no connection to the income derived from the properties (or the farming enterprises), placing additional financial burden on land owners.

It also acts as a barrier to the establishment of new rural enterprises and investment in sustainable land management.

The challenges of farming and managing land in green wedge areas are also often greater than other rural areas because of other factors such as:

- Increased regulations and restrictions due to proximity to residential areas and increased rural densities
- Difficulties with right-to-farm issues.
- Potential higher incidence of land speculation and absentee landholders.
- Dog and fox attacks on farm animals, particularly sheep.

Clearly, there are significant challenges faced by rural landholders within green wedge areas that affect their capacity to undertake a range of farming activities and manage land for rural purposes as defined in Melbourne 2030. These issues are compounded by the fact that there are many new landholders in green wedge areas with very limited land management expertise or environmental awareness.

These challenges are not unique to Whittlesea and many urban rural Interface Councils have developed programs in an attempt to partially address these issues locally. Programs range from education based to rate rebate incentives, however these alone cannot address the conflict that arises in green wedge areas.

They are significant issues that need consideration at State level. They are common to all green wedge areas, requiring a strategic, consistent and adequately funded long-term approach. If the intent is for the green wedge areas to remain 'green', a State wide approach responding to the particular needs of green wedge landholders is essential to ensure long lasting public and environmental benefits to all Victorians.

Proposal

Responses to issues associated with managing green wedge land should be multifaceted and aim to instil a 'land stewardship' ethic in landholders.

The State Government could investigate the following ideas / options:

- A scheme to facilitate the establishment and operation of sustainable agricultural and rural enterprises within the green wedge areas through financial and other incentives to off-set the increased costs incurred in green wedge areas. This could include a specialised Green Wedge grant system or rate off-set with State government financial assistance to enable landholders to pursue sustainable agriculture.
- Establishment of a matching funded program for Green Wedge Councils, based on current expenditures, to support the delivery and improvement of locally based land management extension and incentive programs, consistent with objectives of local Green Wedge Action Plans.
- The establishment of a system of payments to managers of private land in green wedge areas for the provision of ecosystem services (e.g. some form green wedge eco-tender scheme, similar to that provided via the 'PlainsTender' scheme currently in operation).

- An integrated land stewardship and agricultural/landholder extension program tailored to the particular circumstances of land managers in the Green Wedges. This program should be able to accommodate the unique and varied needs of commercial, hobby-farm and rural-residential landholders in green wedge areas. It should assist commercial agriculture enterprises to be productive, sustainable and profitable, while delivering the types of public benefits sought in green wedge areas. It could also include a focus on educating small property managers regarding how to manage their lands in more environmentally-sensitive ways. A well supported, ongoing program to address the unique pressures of green wedge areas is essential to ensuring that they become productive, sustainable, well-managed landscapes, and home to viable rural businesses.

Cost

These initiatives have yet to be costed and are subject to detailed investigations undertaken by the State Government.

State Government Policy Alignment:

**Melbourne 2030 planning for sustainable growth
Policy 2.4 Protect the green wedges of metropolitan Melbourne from inappropriate development**

*"...The government is committed to providing better protection for green wedges through tougher planning controls over use and development.....
The Government will work with local councils and the community to properly plan, manage and protect these areas."*

Policy 3.2 Control development in rural areas to protect agriculture and avoid inappropriate rural residential development

"....Rural residential development should:.....Maintain the long term sustainable use and management of existing natural resource attributes, in activities such as agricultural production...protect existing environmental qualities, such as water quality, native vegetation, biodiversity and habitat.."

Community Sustainability Environmental Priorities

Fact Sheet: Biodiversity and Land Management Priorities: Greater commitment to weed extension and compliance activities

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The Need

Pest plants pose a significant risk to environmental and economic values in the region and beyond. This is recognised in all key natural resource strategies and policies, yet commitment within the region seems to be diminishing.

A greater financial commitment is required in the form of staff extension and compliance resources with a focus on building strong and lasting partnerships with local governments and land managers to better facilitate the delivery of on-ground results.

There is a need to actively seek the views and input of local government with respect to the delivery of programs within their municipal boundaries.

The Proposal

Partnership opportunities include:

- Sharing of weed mapping data/knowledge
- Linking state programs with local activities and initiatives
- Support landholder extension / education work undertaken by local government by providing compliance on problem properties
- Identifying cross promotional opportunities
- Improving communication channels.

The Council is concerned that Department of Primary Industry Extension Officers are under-resourced to effectively undertake the scope of the task.

Cost

There is a human resource cost in implementing this proposal. However, the benefits in terms of achieving the State's environmental sustainability targets would far outweigh this.

State Government Policy Alignment:

Our Environment, Our Future: Sustainability Action Statement 2006

Action Area 4: Healthy and Productive Land
Action Area 7: Flourishing Biodiversity in Healthy Landscapes

Port Phillip and Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy 2004-2009

Target LT4: No establishment of new and emerging weed species, and no further spread of high priority established weeds.

Community Sustainability Environmental Priorities

Fact Sheet: Biodiversity and Land Management Priorities: Tracking system for Net Gain Agreements

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The Need

For Councils to implement 'Net Gain' agreements, appropriate tools and systems are required.

Proposal

The proposal is for the State to develop a GIS interactive tracking system in consultation with local government for 'Net Gain' agreements, which will allow local government to:

- Monitor and track individual agreements on a site by site basis
- Record progression toward a net gain on a site by site basis
- Upload site data / information from site visits
- Allow for reporting of net gain outcomes on a site, municipal and bioregion status.

Cost

The systems required could be developed from adaptations of existing systems. This would enable a cost effective approach with State wide application.

State Government Policy Alignment:

Growing Victoria Together: Strategy – Healthy Environment Targets

“The extent and quality of native vegetation will increase”.

“The condition of our land will improve as the impact of salinity and soil degradation is reduced”.

Our Environment Our Future: Sustainability Action Statement 2006

“Flourishing biodiversity in healthy ecosystems”
(Key action area: page 37)

Victoria's Native Vegetation Management - A framework for Action

Establishes the strategic direction for the protection, enhancement and revegetation of native vegetation across the State. The primary goal is “a reversal, across the entire landscape, of the long-term decline in the extent and quality of native vegetation, leading to a Net Gain” (page 14).

Community Sustainability Environmental Priorities



Fact Sheet: Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR)

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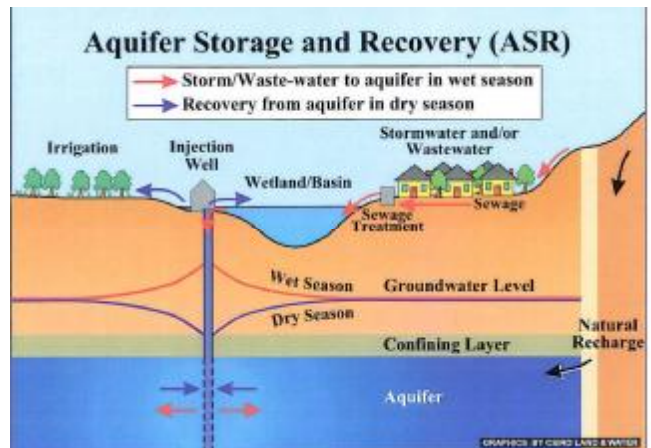
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The Need

Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) is a key alternative water supply option for the substitution of potable water with fit-for-purpose recharged groundwater. MAR is encouraged in the Victorian Government's White Paper "Our Water Our Future: Securing our Water Future Together."

MAR involves "the intentional recharge of water into an aquifer either by injection or infiltration and recovery by planned extraction."¹ Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) is one type of MAR.



The Stockland Mernda Village site represents the first major MAR project in Victoria. It will act as a beacon and encourage future adoption of MAR across the State in suitable sites.

¹ Guidelines for MANAGED AQUIFER RECHARGE (MAR) - Health and Environmental Risk Management, EPA Victoria, Draft 6 - 6 June 2008

Council and Stockland have undertaken significant investigations into the Mernda MAR Scheme to supply treated stormwater to the Mernda-Doreen growth area future regional active open space. This area is planned to contain football ovals, soccer fields, lawn bowl facilities, tennis courts and a leisure centre.

Funding from the Stormwater and Urban Water Conservation Fund allowed the establishment of a successful MAR trial. An annual supply of 25 ML from one bore is possible. Yields may be increased subject to investigation of potential for further injection bores.

Upon completion, over \$1.1 million will have been invested in this vital MAR demonstration project for Victoria. For Council this scheme presents a major organisational, capital and ongoing maintenance commitment.

Proposal

As the project is handed over to the City of Whittlesea from Stockland, we look forward to working with the state government authorities on the key issues of:

- Establishing an appropriate approvals process in line with the draft Victorian Guidelines for Managed Aquifer Recharge (Health and Environmental Risk). The active participation of all State Government stakeholders in working through these processes with MAR proponents is necessary.
- Establishing certainty with regard to resource allocation and access to recharge water from an MAR scheme. It is suggested that MAR proponents will need significant priority rights to recharge groundwater for their particular MAR scheme to provide the confidence to invest in this new approach to potable water substitution in Victoria.

Cost

In total the project will involve over \$1.1 million in investment, with \$250,000 gratefully acknowledged from the Stormwater and Urban Water Conservation Fund.

Further State level funding support would be most welcome to assist the Mernda MAR project in monitoring and managing this benchmark MAR demonstration project for Victoria. Early discussions have been held with CSIRO and other consultants as to appropriate monitoring parameters and methods of promoting MAR in the State as a viable alternative water supply option.

Certainty on MAR recharge water rights also needs to be determined to allow accurate financial modelling to be included in project assessments.

State and Federal Government Policy Alignment

The key Acts in relation to MAR schemes in Victoria are:

Water Act 1989,
Environment Protection Act 1970,
The Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CALP Act)
The Safe Drinking Water Act 2003

Policies and Plans include:

Victorian Government White Paper *Our Water Our Future*

State Environmental Protection Policy (*Waters of Victoria*) 2003 (SEPP WoV)

State Environmental Protection Policy (*Groundwaters of Victoria*) 1997 (SEPP GoV)

Regulations include the *Environment Protection (Scheduled Premises and Exemptions) Regulations 2007*