



Australian Government

Department of Communications and the Arts

Plan Melbourne  
Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning

Dear Sir or Madam

**Plan Melbourne Refresh and telecommunications**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the discussion paper *Plan Melbourne Refresh* of October 2015.

The Department welcomes the work of the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning on measures to support the timely availability of telecommunications infrastructure in new developments in the Victorian Planning Provisions. The Department may also wish to consider including in Plan Melbourne:

- earlier planning for telecommunications infrastructure; and
- adequate spaces and pathways in new buildings.

If you have any questions or need any points clarified, please contact

Yours sincerely

Market Structure Branch

29 December 2015

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## **Department of Communications and the Arts submission to *Plan Melbourne Refresh* discussion paper of October 2015**

### *Introduction*

The Department of Communications and the Arts (the Department) develops policy, advice and initiatives focused on helping Australians realise the full potential of digital communications technologies and services. The Department promotes the ready availability of the telecommunications infrastructure that underpins the widespread use of modern digital communication services.

While the Commonwealth has authority to legislate on telecommunications related matters, many issues relating to the deployment of infrastructure on the ground are more effectively and appropriately dealt with by state and local planning arrangements. The current review of Plan Melbourne provides an opportunity for the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning to consider ways to better integrate the provision of high quality telecommunications infrastructure into planning and design processes.

Given the integral role that telecommunications plays in our daily lives, it is often assumed the infrastructure required to provide telecommunications services will be automatically provided by carriers like Telstra and NBN Co. In reality, the provision of telecommunications infrastructure requires a range of stakeholders in the development and construction process to play their part to deliver the right outcome smoothly, efficiently and when required. On this basis, the Department's submission focuses on the importance of considering telecommunications needs in the planning and design of developments and buildings from the earliest stages, engaging early with telecommunications providers, and installing appropriate infrastructure like pit and pipe and in-building spaces and pathways.

It is also worth noting that while the Australian Government has indicated its commitment to roll out the National Broadband Network (NBN), there is a competitive market for the provision of telecommunications infrastructure, and other providers are able to install and operate telecommunications infrastructure. Planning requirements that relate to telecommunications infrastructure should therefore be flexible enough to accommodate different providers and networks and competition between them.

There are a number of other telecommunications considerations that could be drawn out in the policy and future planning reforms to ensure quality outcomes for all end-users, which the Victorian Government may wish to consider. These other matters are:

- early planning for telecommunications infrastructure; and
- consideration of adequate in-building spaces and pathways.

*Recommendations for consideration*

In summary, the Department appreciates the measures about telecommunications infrastructure already included in the Victorian Planning Provisions.

We encourage the Victorian Government to also consider the inclusion of the following further measures to promote ready access to telecommunications infrastructure and services by end users, namely:

- early consideration of telecommunications needs and early engagement with telecommunications carriers in planning, design and development processes for new projects.
- the inclusion in new buildings of appropriate internal space and pathways for telecommunications equipment and cabling into the initial design.