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**MELBOURNE CAMPUSES**

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Franklin Street CBD

**REGIONAL CAMPUSES**

Bendigo  
Albury-Wodonga  
Mildura  
Shepparton

Dear Sir / Madam,

**Re: Submission to Plan Melbourne Refresh**

**La Trobe University Melbourne Campus and the La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster**

La Trobe University is vitally interest in *Plan Melbourne* and *Plan Melbourne Refresh*.

*Plan Melbourne* introduced the concept of *National Employment Clusters* and identified the University as anchoring the *La Trobe Cluster*, to the north of Melbourne.

The University sees the cluster concept as a major strategic planning initiative that will benefit both the northern region of Melbourne, and the University in realising it ambitious plans to transform the Bundoora Campus into a *University Town*; into a new focal point to the north of Melbourne for learning, for living, for innovation, for working, for shopping, for entertainment, for sport, for culture and for a wide range of community activities.

The University has the basic ingredients needed to make this happen:

- It has an existing on-campus University population of 25,000 staff and students, which is expected to grow to 40,000 by 2030.
- It has a landholding the size of the Melbourne CBD, with some 235 hectares of land available for development.
- It has a culture of research and innovation in fields of endeavour that will be at the forefront of *'the new economy'*.
- It has a unique character and environment that will distinguish it from other clusters and give it National and international appeal.
- It has existing extensive relationships with business and industry and is actively pursuing new and stronger relationships, and the commercialisation of those relationships to create new businesses and jobs.
- It has a new Vision, a new Campus Master Plan and a new Integrated Development Plan, that clearly articulate future directions for the development of the campus. Early works include:
  - La Trobe Sports Park
  - Student Housing
  - Public Transport hub

- The Vice Chancellor and university management are committed to changing the future direction of the University and implementing this exciting vision.



To realise this vision, and for a successful cluster to establish to the north of Melbourne, the University needs assistance from the government:

- It needs assistance in approving new planning controls on the University site that will facilitate and positively encourage both public and private investment.
- It needs government assistance in funding new and upgraded infrastructure that will be required to transform the campus into a *University Town* and a key part of the *La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster*.

The University sees a key role of any refresh of *Plan Melbourne* to:

- Provide clear and unambiguous policy support for clusters, in particular the La Trobe Cluster.
- Provide strong policy support for new planning tools that will fast track and facilitate appropriate public and private investment and development on the University campus.
- Direct government infrastructure funding towards clusters, particularly public transport funding, to make them happen.

The University has reviewed *Plan Melbourne Refresh* and is strongly supportive of the general approach of expanding, clarifying and strengthening the role of clusters. The University:

- Supports retaining ‘*changing economy*’ as a key challenge facing Melbourne and Victorian over coming decades, and the need for it to remain at the fore in the revision of *Plan Melbourne*.
- Supports retaining ‘*Delivering Jobs and Investment*’ as a key theme driving the policy directions of *Plan Melbourne Refresh*.
- Supports retaining, strengthening and better describing the concept of *National Employment Clusters* and changing the name to *National Employment and Innovation Clusters*.
- Identifies the need to better integrate the concept of *National Employment and Innovation Clusters* throughout *Plan Melbourne Refresh* generally, and to embed it in other relevant themes and chapters contained in the document.
- Strongly supports the need for new planning tools and better decision making frameworks to cut red tape and to positively encourage and facilitate public and private development in *NEIC*’s.
- Stresses the need for government investment to be directed towards *NEIC*’s to improve infrastructure, in particular public transport accessibility in and to the La Trobe Cluster.

The University makes the following more specific comments under relevant chapter headings used throughout the document.

#### **growth challenges, fundamental principles and key concepts**

The University has no issue with changing the concept of the ‘*economic triangle*’ to the ‘*polycentric city*’. However it is not clear what role *NEIC*’s have as nodal points in a polycentric city, in comparison to activity centres, for example.

It is envisaged that some *NEIC*’s, such as La Trobe, will also be significant activity centres in their own right, including retail facilities, in addition to being a part of a wider cluster. The inter-relationship between *NEIC*’s and activity centres should be discussed and be better explained and expanded in the document.

#### **delivering jobs and investment**

The University supports comments made about the need to better explain the intent and significance of *National Employment Clusters*, and the importance of innovation and growing knowledge based jobs in clusters.

The more emphasis placed on the importance of clusters in any revised document, the more successful the concept will have in attracting investment and in attracting government funding for infrastructure improvements.

The University supports the change of name from *National Employment Cluster* to *National Employment and Innovation Clusters*. However, it notes that a mere name change and better explanation of the concept will not have any practical impacts, unless government:

- allocates resources to better plan clusters;
- invests in public infrastructure in clusters to attract and support investment by institutions such as La Trobe University and the private sector; and
- reforms planning controls and cuts red tape in clusters, and in particular on the University's campus.

In relation to the option raised in the document of either redefining the boundaries of the clusters to relate to core institutions, or taking a broader approach (p30), the University suggests a two stage process:

- Initially the main focus should be on core institutions and strategic development sites with short term development potential, such as the La Trobe University site.
- In the medium to longer term, the focus could be expanded to include the planning of the wider area surrounding clusters, as time and resources become available.

#### **a more connected Melbourne**

The opportunity should be taken in this section to specifically refer to the need to review transport and accessibility within, to and between *NEIC's*, especially public transport.

*NEIC's* will only be successful in transforming the State and metropolitan economy, and increasing access to jobs in the middle and outer suburbs of Melbourne, if they become some of the most accessible places in Melbourne (and Victoria).

This needs to be clearly stated within this section of the document and elsewhere throughout any revision of *Plan Melbourne*.

Greater attention needs to be placed on the importance of public transport options other than just 'rail' (p41), given the impracticality of providing new heavy rail infrastructure to clusters like La Trobe, and the need to rely on other modes of public transport such as trams (light rail) and buses.

The proposal to bring the 86 tram into the heart of the Melbourne campus, through the proposed La Trobe Sports Park, illustrates a practical and straight forward response to this vital issue.

#### **housing**

La Trobe University's Melbourne campus has very considerable potential for medium and higher density housing, as part of the evolution of the University to a major mixed use destination and *University Town* to the north of Melbourne.

The opportunity should be taken in *Plan Melbourne Refresh* to highlight the opportunity that *NEIC's* provide, particularly La Trobe, to make a significant contribution to accommodating Melbourne's future housing needs.

**new planning tools**

The University sees a key role of *Plan Melbourne Refresh*, to provide clear and unambiguous policy direction supporting the need to reform the planning approvals process in relation to *NEIC's*. This is especially the case in relation to institutional land such as La Trobe University's Melbourne Campus.

There are many ways in which either existing planning tools could be applied, or new planning tools and decision making responsibilities can be developed, that would facilitate and positively encourage appropriate development in clusters. It is not necessary for *Plan Melbourne* to specify exactly what the combination of tools should be. However the document should make very clear the objectives to be achieved, which should include:

- Positively attracting and facilitating public and private investment in institutional land and on strategic development sites within clusters.
- Avoiding the need for unnecessary planning approvals.
- Removing third party involvement i.e. advertising, objections and appeals to de-risk major investment and employment opportunities.
- Support for ministerial amendments to planning schemes to implement new provisions for precincts and projects that are consistent with the *National Employment and Innovation Cluster* concept.
- Working directly with key stakeholders (such as La Trobe University) to develop planning tools appropriate to their site specific needs.
- Clarifying the role of planning agencies in the making of plans and in decision making in relation to clusters i.e. the Minister, DELWEP, the MPA and local councils - avoiding overlapping responsibilities and ensure a coordinated approach etc.

We look forward to a positive response from Government in relation to our submissions.

Should you require any further information please contact the undersigned on

**Director, Planning & Development**  
**Infrastructure and Operations Group**