

Melbourne Refresh should be commended for the approach taken in raising points for discussion. The summaries and information sheets are helpful for plain English and a starting point for those who wish to comment but will be unable to read Refresh Melbourne in its entirety.

I concur that it is important that productive land is retained as farmland and there should be limits to the spread of Melbourne.

The Ministerial Advisory Report states that: “There is a compelling case for change as the city’s population heads towards 8 million, meaning that our city will be bigger than most European cities.”

Simple densification as outlined in Plan Melbourne Refresh is not the answer. We need to begin by asking the right questions and considering the appropriate long term solutions, as other countries, such as Singapore and parts of Europe have been prepared to do. The solutions, by their nature are multi-faceted, and include infrastructure, decentralisation or regionalisation. With the appropriate questions posed we will be able to create a bold, visionary plan to keep and enhance the best features of our city and accommodate any population growth. Central to this **must** be a consideration of the amenity and qualities that existing residents in Melbourne cherish about this city and its suburbs.

Key Questions as a Starting Point that Should be Asked and Addressed

Is it desirable to have a population of 8 million for Melbourne?

What will happen to Melbourne’s liveability?

How will Melbourne function as a city?

What will happen to economic development?

What will be the social needs of a city of 8 million people?

In short, it may appear heretical to pose this question – but surely these are the basic issues? Australian can accommodate expanded population growth but for a metropolis of this size without adequate public transport as it the case now; without a strong public urban planning system to balance developer short term interests with multi- generational needs, the adverse consequences and profound negative affects on Melbourne’s “livability” must be immense.

Our heritage suburbs and historic buildings in the middle suburbs provide priceless amenity but are affected by inappropriate development, diminishing their worth. Unfortunately, Melbourne doesn’t have the architectural or design standards that other modern cities have. The consequence, as is all too apparent, are building forms, juxtaposed against established and generally consistent building styles which are creating a level of community angst and concern which is evident.

Pressure on services and infrastructure will detract from livability.

Planning for a city of 8 million is not a simple matter of doubling the provision of housing. Too many urban issues arise from failing to plan from the bottom up – what infrastructure is required. Serious planning issues need to be addressed.

Is our population growth too rapid? Our city is being pock marked by inappropriate development. These developments are a constant reminder of the failure of planning. We need breathing space to assess the nature of development that has occurred so that we can make sound judgments about the future development of our city.

What is a sustainable population for Melbourne? We need a comprehensive study to determine what is a sustainable population for Melbourne and indeed Victoria. Only then can address how these people should be housed.

What sort of city do we want Melbourne to be? I believe it should be livable in the Australian context. Furthermore, it should not be a copy of Sydney. What is it that makes Melbourne? What is the identity of Melbourne? I think it is a city that as Norman Day has pointed out “a city that is lived on the street” and I would add that these streets have a green canopy. Our Victorian and Edwardian suburbs together with our shopping strips are the backbone of Melbourne. Planning for our city should reflect this.

What other factors should be considered? Australia has traditionally been a highly urbanised country. Could Melbourne and Victoria’s economic, environmental and social needs be better met? There could be significant opportunities by encouraging development in rural Victoria through decentralisation. This could include a new planned city, development in provincial cities and decaying country towns.

Plan Melbourne and Refresh Melbourne are too simplistic conceptually. Intensification particularly as outlined in Refresh Melbourne has the flaw of simply adding in more people. We need more time to develop a more sophisticated and complex approach to development in our city and in Victoria.

Support for Plan Melbourne Refresh

Climate change

I support the inclusion of climate change goals and strategies as a priority for the basis for planning decisions as outlined in Refresh Melbourne. Implementation measures are required outlined to ensure that the goals and strategies are met otherwise this objective will not be realised.

Whole of Government Approach to Planning

I support the whole of government approach to planning as outlined in Refresh Melbourne but would add that it should include the whole of Victoria.

Mandatory Population and Housing Development Targets

I support the abolition of mandatory population and housing development targets in all suburbs as under the previous Plan Melbourne. Suburbs have their own characteristics and a mandatory approach does not recognize the underlying differences between suburbs.

New Planning Tools

I support improvements in multi unit development so ‘that proponents achieve a set of premium development standards related to dwelling design, open space and urban design.’ This matter needs to be addressed as a priority. From Coburg to Brunswick to Yarraville to Kew and Blackburn residents’ liveability and amenity are being reduced and impacted upon by developments that are designed to accommodate as many dwellings as possible based on the notions of quick profit and quick turnover. We are destroying the very things that help to make Melbourne liveable and give us our identity. Poorly designed, both inside and out they are a bleak reminder for us and future generations of the limitations of early 21st century planning. We are making the same sort of planning mistakes of the 60’s with the rise of the walkup 3 storey blocks of flats with parking at ground level. Surely we can learn from these mistakes.

Opposition to Plan Melbourne Refresh

70/30 housing target

I am opposed to the plan for the middle ring of suburbs to support 70 percent of the expected population growth in Melbourne. Increased density as proposed in refresh Melbourne is not the answer. The middle suburbs should be protected from increased development. Various Council Housing Strategies indicate that the current zoning allows for more than the required number of dwellings to 2051. Where is the strategic justification for a 70/30 housing target?

Further strategies need to be developed to protect the “leaf green” heritage suburbs and the “leaf green” non heritage suburbs. The middle ring suburbs have not been protected from loss of heritage, trees and vegetation and inappropriate development by the current planning schemes. Rescode needs to be modified at the single dwelling level so prevent ‘Mc Mansions’ (monoliths that stretch from boundary to boundary) that stretch from boundary to boundary and at the multi unit level. We need to protect the greenness of Melbourne. (for reasons of amenity, the protection of neighbourhood character and to reduce the effects of climate change).

Use of Percentages Outcomes

I am opposed to the use of percentage outcomes. I support a metropolitan housing strategy that sets out preferred housing outcomes. Strategic policy and the attributes of land should determine land use policy.

Infrastructure

In many suburbs infrastructure is at capacity or beyond capacity. Refresh Melbourne does not address how to match infrastructure with increased population. How will additional service infrastructure be provided?

Transport Corridors

I am opposed to the densification including along transport corridors where it will be to the detriment of heritage buildings and the character of key activity corridors. Such development would lead to the loss of local character and in turn to the diminution of Melbourne's character and identity.

Third Party rights

Third party rights to oppose a development are essential in a democracy.

Codified Planning

I am opposed to the introduction of a codified planning process. Developments should be considered by the local community and assessed by planning officers case by case.

Development Incentives

I am opposed to the use of development incentives to achieve particular results. All developments should comply with the same set of standards.

Other comments

The Role of Private Developers

Melbourne has bathed in the glory of being the world's most liveable city for at least the last decade. This title is in imminent danger of being lost, as Melbourne is being subsumed by a sea of inappropriate multi unit private development . Current private development is failing us. Any one can be a developer. A clear focus of Refresh Melbourne should be to improve development standards so that they meet best practice in design, community expectations and needs. We need planning laws in Melbourne that will result in the Melbourne that we want to live in, not the one that developers want to build. Stringent planning regulations with mandatory heights, limiting building bulk, improving design features, increasing landscaping and permeability ratios and increasing usable private open space are starting points.

This should occur at the single dwelling and multi unit dwelling levels. Each development has to make a contribution to the liveability of Melbourne. A social contract should be put into place so that developers also need to meet social and environmental outcomes.

Alternative models of housing development should be investigated and encouraged. The State Government should also be involved. Instead of continuing to sell land simply to the highest bidder there should be consideration of the public good and the insertion of social and affordable housing clauses into the sale contracts. Furthermore, the Government should initiate and lead significant development projects. There are several government departments such as Major Projects Victoria, Metropolitan Planning Authority and Infrastructure Victoria that could be involved.

VCAT

New planning tools should include the removal of planning matters from VCAT and the return to Local Government with increased levels of probity. In addition, planning decisions should be enforced.

Uplift in Values versus Devaluing

Rezoning is an issue of fairness. Plan Melbourne Refresh comments on uplift in values for property owners but does not address the decrease in values experienced by some owners. The recent rezoning of land by Councils in 2014 is a case in point. Overnight, properties in the RGZ or GRZ5 increased in value because of their development potential for apartments or townhouses. Conversely properties abutting these properties but without development potential are reduced in value when developments are proposed and usually suffer loss of amenity in some form.

Governments and the planning industry have side stepped this issue but it is time that it is addressed.

Certainty for Property Owners

The application of the residential zones in 2014 should have resulted in certainty for property owners. A local resident in my area has had her property rezoned 3 times in the last 2 years. This has caused great anxiety for her and other residents in her street. The recent announcement of a further review is deeply concerning.

Affordability

Affordability is a complex issue. Increasing the supply of housing is not necessarily going to make housing more affordable. People live where they can afford. Forty years ago many first home owners chose the inner city suburbs simply because that was what they could afford. It was not a matter of choice. Yet today the inner city is a valued location by many. Some areas will always be

more expensive than other areas. Forcing densification will not result in more affordable housing.

The boom in house prices over the last 3 years is of particular concern. It has seen first home buyers forced out of the market as investors take their place. Prosper, Australia in a report entitled Speculative Vacancies suggests that there is not a housing supply problem in Melbourne. Rather, investors have chosen to leave the properties vacant hoping for capital gains and in turn creating an artificial scarcity of housing. A sudden property price decline or an economic slowdown would reveal housing supply as owners start to sell or seek rental income to deal with the effect of falling property prices.

Other sectors of the market have also been affected. People wishing to downsize especially in the middle ring of suburbs find that it is easy to sell a family home but that other choices such as home unit sell for only slightly less than the property that they have sold.

Multi unit development may increase the availability of housing but it does not necessarily make it more affordable.

We need a bold and visionary plan to keep and enhance the best features of Melbourne while developing it as a 21st century city. We need to look beyond Melbourne and consider all of Victoria. This plan must involve the whole of government and have as its basis strategic justification and ideas of best practice. Plan Melbourne Refresh is not a bold and visionary plan. It is simplistic and lacks strategic justification. We can do better.