

Land Use Planning Policy

1. Background

Low-density cities are expensive to service with transport and utilities, and they are vulnerable to oil price rises and interruptions to oil supply. Buildings and transport in Victoria's cities emit a high level of greenhouse gases. New homes in Melbourne are on average the largest in the world and lack ecologically sustainable design features.

The spread of low-density urban development is eroding horticultural and agricultural land, and destroying bio-diversity. Traffic congestion, air pollution, noise, and visual pollution are degrading the quality of life in our cities. Some of Melbourne's older suburbs lack sufficient public open space.

There is a lack of certainty and direction in the management of urban development, creating conflicts between developers and residents and threatening our heritage buildings.

The rapid growth of Melbourne is putting upward pressure on house prices, while many of our smaller regional cities and towns are stagnating or shrinking. Urban development is threatening to destroy the amenity of coastal areas such as the Surf Coast.

There are limited employment opportunities in our regional cities and towns.

2. Principles

The Australian Greens Victoria believe that:

1. All planning decisions should give greater weight to environmental factors, to deliver sustainable, human-scaled, livable communities that are easy to get around.
2. Local communities and governments need ongoing, substantive, and meaningful opportunities to participate in planning decision-making.
3. Many urban areas need more open space and habitat for native plants and animals, requiring rigorous planning and regulatory support.

3. Goals

The Australian Greens Victoria will work towards:

1. Well-integrated, prosperous, richly interactive, sociable communities, living within our means without borrowing from future generations.
2. Planning certainty which provides clarity and protection to land owners, communities and the environment, across all zones.
3. Victorian Planning Provisions which go beyond just protection and conservation of biodiversity and natural systems, to facilitating their extension and improvement.
4. Native vegetation protected, maintained and enhanced for its biodiversity values, through stronger planning scheme provisions, reform of the native vegetation framework, and the funding of an independent ombudsman advocate for the environment.
5. The maintenance of Melbourne's existing (2005) Urban Growth Boundary.
6. Decentralisation incentives to industry, commerce, and service providers (especially in the Health sector), to take the pressure off Greater Melbourne and create regional jobs by further developing Victoria's large and medium-sized regional cities and townships.
7. The protection of rural and agricultural areas adjoining regional and rural townships, by creating township urban growth boundaries.
8. Public lands and assets, including public open space, being protected from alienation or inappropriate commercial development.
9. Protection of heritage buildings and streetscapes.

10. Mixed use medium density residential, commercial, office and (where appropriate) industrial development being increased in regional centres, small towns and suburban centres, with convenient access to frequent public transport.
11. Greenfield/brownfield land being converted to urban uses only after public transport (electrified rail, tram or bus) construction has been factored into the land development pricing along with local/state government partnerships.
12. Public open space usable for recreation activities being provided within accessible walking distance (400m) of all dwellings in urban areas.
13. The form of the landscape, streetscapes and gardens of public value being protected, and where new public space is introduced, conducting remediation of damaged landscape by planting that enhances biodiversity.
14. Governance of all local planning decisions undertaken by local councils, within a statewide framework.
15. The provision of Community Engagement Frameworks mandated to be part of all Municipal Strategic Statements (MSS).
16. VCAT's role reverting to being an administrative appeals body only, rather than a planning authority.
17. Ministerial amendments and permits being required to follow the same public processes as all other responsible authorities.

4. Key Priorities

The Australian Greens Victoria will work towards:

1. Reforming Victoria's planning schemes to provide more prescriptive guidance in the development of commercial, residential and rural zones, which is based on thorough detailed description and needs-based research.
2. Increasing state budget rural and regional allocations in percentage terms to stimulate jobs, investment and population in these areas.
3. Creating a permanent green belt around Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary.
4. Introducing Urban Growth Boundaries around regional/rural townships.
5. Reviewing the Central Activity District classification of Broadmeadows, Frankston and Ringwood.
6. Prescribing a minimum density of 40 dwellings per hectare (gross) for residential developments within 400 metres of railway stations in nominated activity centres.
7. Prescribing a minimum average density of 20 dwellings per hectare (gross) for residential development on land within Melbourne's growth corridors.
8. Reforming the native vegetation framework, to effectively protect existing native vegetation and reverse the current destruction of Victoria's biodiversity.
9. Conducting a public inquiry into heritage protection in Victoria, and restoring third party objection and appeal rights to Heritage Victoria decisions.
10. Strengthening the Environmental Effects Statement process, to enable proposals that result in a loss of bio-diversity or a reduction of the areas of parks and reserves to be blocked.
11. Incorporating land use provisions of Catchment Management Authorities' catchment plans into Victoria's Planning Schemes.
12. Auditing all public land, and creating a public assessment process to be used prior to any alienation or change of use of public land.
13. Requiring all planning scheme amendments, including Ministerial amendments, to be exhibited with a provision enabling the Minister to exhibit interim or emergency controls immediately after amending the planning scheme.
14. Mandating responsible authorities to enforce planning permits and prosecute breaches of the Planning and Environment Act.