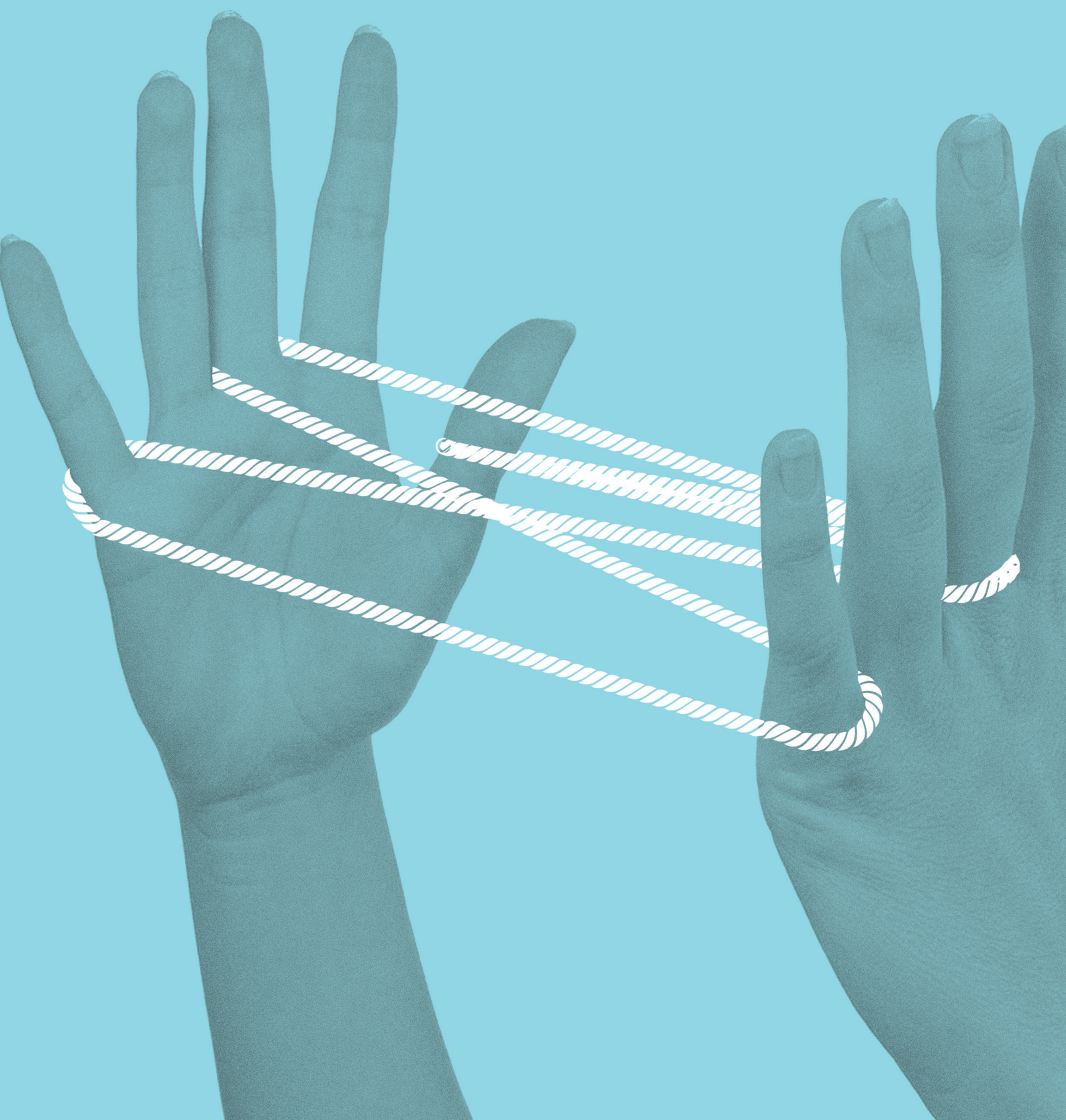


Community building in growth areas – *the case for a coordinated approach*



**The Growth Areas
Social Planning Tool**



Community building in growth areas – *the case for a coordinated approach*

The Growth Areas Social Planning Tool

A number of organisations have made a valuable contribution to the development of the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool:

REFERENCE GROUP

The Reference Group has ensured a wide range of stakeholder input into the development of the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool.

Australian Communities Foundation
Brotherhood of St Laurence
Cardinia Shire
City of Casey
City of Greater Geelong
City of Hume
City of Melton
City of Moonee Valley
City of Whittlesea
Department of Health
Department of Human Services
Department of Transport Planning and Local Infrastructure
Foundation for Young Australians
Kildonan
Metropolitan Planning Authority
Municipal Association of Victoria
Mitchell Shire Council
North-East Neighbourhood House Network
Scouts Victoria
Victorian Council for Social Service
VicHealth
Wyndham City Council

STEERING GROUP

The Steering Group is comprised of senior decision-makers from government agencies and peak bodies who have a role in community building in Victoria.

Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres
Australian Communities Foundation
Australian Learning Communities Network
Cardinia Shire
City of Casey
City of Hume
City of Melton
City of Whittlesea
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure
Foundation for Young Australians
Metropolitan Planning Authority
Mitchell Shire Council
Municipal Association of Victoria
National Growth Areas Alliance
Planning Institute Australia, Victoria Division
Urban Development Institute of Australia
VicHealth
Victorian Council of Social Service
Victorian Local Governance Association
Wyndham City Council

Establishing a coordinated approach to community building in growth areas



The Growth Areas Social Planning Tool project was initiated as a response to an identified lack of coordinated planning for the programs, activities, events and services that serve to enhance social connection and build community capacity in Melbourne's growth areas.

This is the third stage of a four-stage project aimed at developing a tool that will provide a consistent process to coordinate the effort of all stakeholders undertaking community building in growth areas.



The purpose of this report

This report articulates why we need to establish a coordinated approach to community building in growth areas. It:

- articulates the challenges in growth area communities
- details how growth area communities are currently being planned, particularly from a community building perspective
- presents a case for why we need a coordinated process for community building
- makes recommendations for adoption of the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool as the coordinated process.

What is a growth area?

Over the last decade, the largest population growth in Australia has been heavily concentrated in the outer suburbs of Melbourne.

The Urban Growth Zone (UGZ) was introduced to bring forward enough land for 90,000 new residential blocks.

Within this UGZ, a range of surrounding areas were integrated into Melbourne's 'growth areas', including the municipalities and parts of Casey, Cardinia, Hume, Melton, Mitchell, Whittlesea and Wyndham.

What is community building?

Community building is defined as the processes, programs, events, services, networks and activities that support individuals and families to meet their social and personal needs in a particular place through personal growth, social interaction, social services support and community development.

What is social planning?

Social planning is the process of identifying needs, setting priorities, formulating equitable solutions and undertaking collaborative action for community building.

The journey...

2009

The Melbourne Community Foundation released *Macromelbourne Initiative*, a compilation of projects needing funding to address issues in Melbourne's growth areas.

One of the proposed projects, identified by the City of Whittlesea, was to develop a strengths-based, flexible and dynamic tool to guide the building of strong communities and liveable neighbourhoods in growth areas.

Stage 1

2011

The project received philanthropic funding for a literature review titled *There's Something About Community*.

The literature review revealed that there is no established benchmark system or set of objective standards for community building in growth areas. It recommended the need to:

1. Establish a benchmark standard for the funding of community development and community support services into growth areas
2. Develop a good practice guide for community building in growth areas
3. Develop a model planning framework for social infrastructure plans for growth area councils
4. Provide organisational capacity building assistance to not for profits (NFPs) and organisations in growth areas.

2011

A project reference group was established, comprising representatives from Melbourne's seven growth area councils and a broad range of stakeholders with an interest in community building in growth areas.

Stage 2

2012

Research was undertaken to identify best practice in community building relevant to growth areas. The resulting report, *Social Connection, Community Wellbeing and Good Practice* highlighted the importance of focusing on resources and facilities to promote cohesion at the same time as building the physical environment.

It identified six planning principles for community building (discussed further in the following section).

2011
2013

Stage 3

The current stage of the project will build on the research and findings from the first two stages and culminate in the development of the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool.

Stage 4

2014

The fourth and final stage of the project will involve piloting the tool when planning for a new growth area community.

The challenge of the growth areas

Rapid housing growth has outstripped infrastructure and service delivery, leading to poorly serviced communities

Future growth is predicted in the inner city and north and west growth areas

Melbourne's housing growth 2001–2012¹

50% has been in established areas

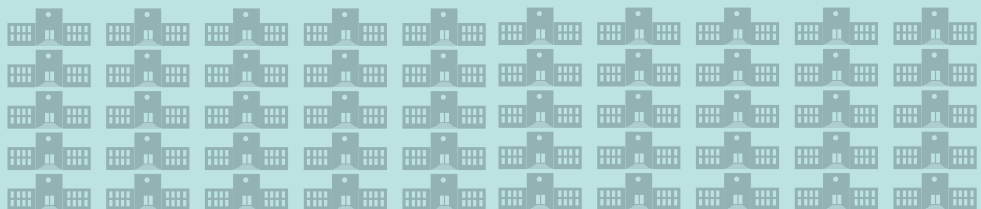


50% has been in growth areas



Tightened funding from all sources makes it unlikely that the infrastructure and service backlog will be filled soon

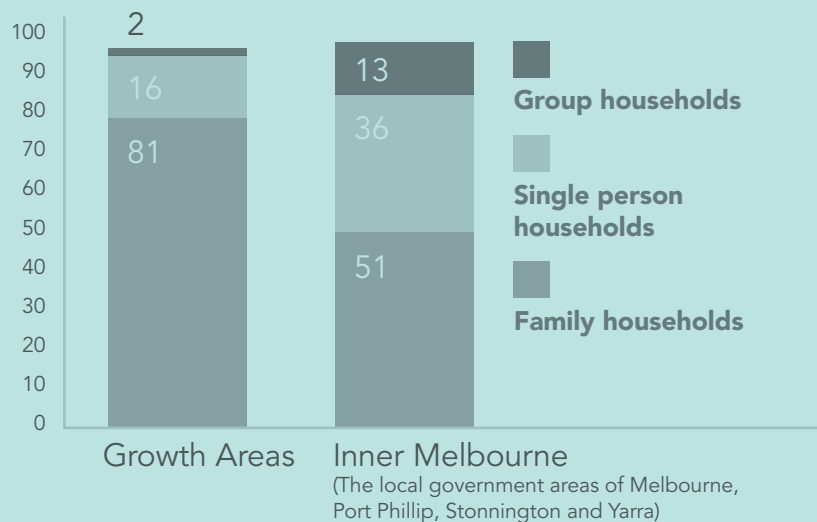
\$100 billion backlog in Victoria²



40 to 50 schools needed over the next 10–15 years³

The appeal of growth areas to families priced out of inner areas but wanting the future security of owning their own home is creating communities without household and generational diversity

Only 20% of couples with children have the income needed to enter the housing market in the inner or middle suburbs (\$150K per year)⁴



Growth areas are predicted to have the largest increases in older people by 2031

Growth areas have more families and more:

- Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders
- Non-English speakers at home
- Household income of \$1K–\$2K per week (<\$600 per week is low)

Financial stress and long commutes for work contribute to family stress and decreased wellbeing

Highest rates of family violence⁶

Lowest rates of self reported wellbeing⁵

Growth area residents are more likely to:

- Travel more than two hours per day for work⁵
- Think work and daily life interfere with each other⁵
- Think they don't have enough time for family and friends⁵
- Have mortgage stress and be vulnerable⁷ to mortgage, inflation and petrol risks⁵

While the growth areas are disadvantaged in the ways described above, they have fewer low income households (<\$600 per week). Poverty disadvantage is concentrated elsewhere in Melbourne

Moving away from social supports and long commutes makes balancing work and caring responsibilities more difficult

Growth areas have fewer community networks:

- Longer commutes, a lower reliance on outdoor public space and car dependency, mean people miss out on forming community networks vital to wellbeing and caring (especially given decreased local family networks). Residents of growth areas are more dependent on formal services for caring.



- The separation of residential areas from employment means some residents—particularly higher skilled women—take lower skilled jobs to meet caring responsibilities. As the baby boomers leave the workforce productivity will depend on ensuring all workers are matched to the best possible job.

- Young people may also be affected if they go to a third place for school and do not have local networks. A lack of transport may mean they are home alone for extended periods after school.⁸

Less community participation is felt as a loss by residents, decreases well being in individuals, and impacts on the liveability of places

Growth area residents are less likely to:

- Be a member of an organised group, (sports, church, community, professional)
- Be involved in their children's schools
- Have attended a community event in the past six months
- Report their area has good services and facilities such as shops, childcare, schools and libraries; easy access to recreational and leisure facilities⁹

We bought a house in the outer suburbs because we couldn't afford a deposit on an established house in the middle suburbs and because the infill apartments we saw were unappealingly cramped... The advantages of home ownership are great in this country... Governments of all stripes since the 1980s [have told us] you have to build your own security.

Now if all of this is unravelling and [people think the growth areas are] unsustainable... we must find equitable ways [of dealing with it]. The goal is to build an awareness of the problems we have created together and must solve together. Lasting solutions will, I think, reflect the kindness we are prepared to show strangers, especially those who are poorer, less advantaged and younger than ourselves.

*– Mark Peel; *The Inside Story of Life on the Outer*.
The Age, 16/9/2007*

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Melbourne *Let's Talk About the Future: Draft Background Report*, Department of Planning & Community Development (DPCD), 2012.
- 2 *Infrastructure Partnerships Australia*, 2012, by Committee of Melbourne, www.melbourne.org.au
- 3 Education requirements collated by growth area councils 2013.
- 4 ABS Census data 2011 from Melbourne *Let's Talk About the Future: Draft Background Report*; Department of Planning & Community Development, 2012.
- 5 VicHealth Indicators Survey, 2011.
- 6 Victoria Police Crime Statistics 2011–12.
- 7 *Unsettling suburbia: the new landscape of oil and mortgage vulnerability in Australian cities*. Dodson and Sipe, 2008, Urban Research Paper 17, Griffith University.
- 8 *Linked up lives: putting together work, home and community in ten suburbs*, Williams, Pocock & Bridge, 2009, Centre for Work and Daily Life, University of South Australia; Andrews, 2012 Deakin University.
- 9 Pope 2008, *Indicators of Community Strength at the Local Government Area Level in Victoria*, DPCD.



The current process for delivering new communities in Victoria

Planning for new growth area communities is a multi-faceted process and one which can vary across different councils and contexts. Whilst the need to create and support the notion of 'community' is reflected in a wide range of policies, in reality there is a disconnect between land-use planning and social planning.

Social planning for new communities is undertaken to varying degrees depending on the stakeholders involved in the process. This is largely due to a lack of a clearly defined process for social planning or a mechanism for it to align with, and inform land-use planning.

The Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA, formerly the Growth Areas Authority) was established in 2006 to facilitate coordinated planning and development of Melbourne's growth areas. Prior to 2006, land-use planning for growth areas was largely ad hoc and is now guided by the precinct structure planning process which is overseen

by the MPA, (further described on the following pages). The key aim of the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool is to establish a coordinated process for social planning in the same way that the precinct structure planning process was established for land-use planning.

This section details how new communities are currently planned and delivered in Victoria. It illustrates the policy context within which strategic planning is undertaken, the overall 'system' in which new communities are delivered and what is and isn't working with our current approach. This section has been informed by interviews with a range of community building practitioners working in growth areas, as well as a more detailed investigation of the planning and delivery of five growth area communities, including:

- South Morang, City of Whittlesea
- Caroline Springs, City of Melton
- Roxburgh Park, City of Hume
- Tarneit, Wyndham City
- Pakenham, Cardinia Shire

The policy context in which new communities are developed...

The Planning and Environment Act 1987

A framework for planning the use, development and protection of land in Victoria. Its main functions are to set the broad objectives for planning in Victoria; set the main rules and principles for how the Victorian planning system works; set the key planning procedures and statutory instruments in the Victorian planning system; and define the roles and responsibilities of the Minister, councils, government departments, the community and other stakeholders.

Metropolitan Planning Strategy

The Victorian Government prepared a Metropolitan Planning Strategy (MPS) to manage Melbourne's growth and change. The strategy will consider where new housing and business activities should be concentrated as well as transport connections, health services, schools, playgrounds and parks.

Legislation and planning context

Local governments operate and work to a number of federal and state government legislation and plans. State government's strategies for growth and development are key drivers of council's land-use planning.

Council plans and municipal health and wellbeing plans

Councils have a statutory obligation to have a council plan which articulates council's strategic objectives as well as a municipal health and wellbeing plan which defines goals and strategies for achieving maximum health in the community.

Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS)

Contains the strategic planning and land use and development objectives of the municipality and the strategies for achieving them. It provides the basis for the use of zones and other land use controls within the planning scheme.

Other strategic plans and policies

Councils develop other strategic plans and policies as emerging issues are identified and the needs of the community change, such as youth strategies and access and inclusion policies.

Precinct structure planning

Precinct structure plans (PSPs) are masterplans for whole communities. They lay out roads, shopping centres, schools, parks, housing, employment and transport connections. PSPs can be prepared by council, landowners, or other agencies directed by the Minister for Planning. MPA is the statutory authority for overseeing the preparation of PSPs in Melbourne's growth areas.

Structure planning

Structure planning involves the development of a framework for how an activity centre will develop. Structure plans provide a long-term guide for changes in land uses, buildings and public spaces within a given activity centre.

How we currently deliver new communities in Victoria?

The Land-Use Planning Process

The process

The Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) is the statutory authority responsible for overseeing planning for Melbourne's growth areas.

Land-use planning for growth areas is determined through Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs). PSPs lay out roads, shopping centres, schools, parks, housing, employment and connections to transport for new communities of between 10,000 and 30,000 people.

Pre-planning: gathering evidence before planning for the new community

Councils, state government agencies and service providers are notified of the MPA's intent to prepare a PSP, which triggers information exchange to inform the PSP.

Developing the plan for the new community

The MPA is generally responsible for preparing the PSP. Stakeholders are consulted to varying degrees depending on the area.

Background investigations are commissioned to provide a technical basis for planning for a new growth area. This usually includes a community infrastructure needs assessment which determines the nature and size of community facilities that are to be included in the precinct structure plan. The facilities generally include schools, early years' facilities, public open spaces, sporting facilities, community centres and libraries.

The inclusion of community building needs in determining land uses depends on the methodology applied by the technical specialist undertaking the assessment and whether the relevant council has an up-to-date needs analysis/evidence base that can inform the process.

A vision for the new community is established that considers character and identity, general planning parameters, environmental, social, economic and physical infrastructure concerns.

Once all relevant investigations have been undertaken, the PSP is prepared. PSPs comprise the elements that make up the precinct including transport, activity centres, housing, employment, community facilities and natural open space networks.

Mobilising the plan: community formation

The PSP is approved by the Minister for Planning and incorporated into the local planning scheme.

A significant proportion of infrastructure for a new community is funded through the Development Contributions Scheme.

Development contributions are payments or in-kind works, facilities or services provided by developers towards the supply of infrastructure required to meet the needs of a particular community.

Development Contributions Plans are generally prepared by the MPA in consultation with councils and developers.

Infrastructure funded through development contributions generally includes roads, public transport, open space and community facilities. A Development Contributions Plan sits alongside each precinct structure plan.

Items that are not included in a DCP are funded either directly by councils, state government departments (for example, DEECD funds schools) and other providers.

Once a PSP has been approved, councils take responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the PSP.

In order to start developing the precinct, landowners must apply for planning permits. Development commences once building permits are issued.

How we currently deliver new communities in Victoria?

The Social Planning Process

The process

Councils take primary responsibility for social planning.

There is no agreed standard process for social planning for growth areas.

Pre-planning: gathering evidence before planning for the new community

The extent to which social planning is mobilised at the pre-planning stage of a PSP depends on the council. The biggest influencing factor appears to be the level of understanding and relevance that strategic planners within Council give to community building.

If social planning is mobilised, it generally involves the social/community planners coordinating information for the strategic planners who then liaise with the MPA.

There has traditionally been little cross-department planning within councils for the delivery of new communities.

Developing the plan for the new community

Councils are generally the primary coordinating body for maintaining an evidence base and keeping abreast of community building needs.

The comprehensiveness of the data and evidence that councils keep around community needs varies significantly, as does the level of community engagement around identifying needs.

Councils generally develop community infrastructure plans (again varying in what they contain) but often there is a lack of planning around human services and community building.

The level of collaboration between the different disciplines involved in delivering new communities in council varies, as does the level of collaboration with external stakeholders.

Other stakeholders such as NGOs also undertake some needs analysis and strategic planning but councils generally take on the responsibility of engaging with these organisations and holistically understanding overall needs. NGOs can find it difficult to participate in long-term forward planning due to the tenuous nature of their funding, staffing capacity and the time lag of development.

Engagement of stakeholders in social planning for growth areas varies between councils. Sometimes it happens on an ongoing basis through reference groups or one off consultation for specific projects.

Some of the more progressive developers collaborate with council around early delivery of community infrastructure and very occasionally for a community development function within the new community.

Mobilising the plan: community formation

The timing with which community building happens depends on when councils undertake social planning for the new community. At times social planning commences once the community is already established and therefore there is a lag in community building.

There is no set funding mechanism for community building as there is for land use. Councils and other stakeholders are generally responsible for directly funding or obtaining funding for community building.

The level of funding put towards community building varies between councils and between communities.

Recurrent funding for community building has become increasingly scarce. Neighbourhood house funding is currently the only form of recurrent funding for community building. The funding available for one-off initiatives has also decreased significantly.

Question: What are the current challenges to social planning for growth areas?

...and how can the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool help?

The challenges articulated here were identified through consultation for this project.

Issue:

What the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool will do:

Planning for new communities is often focused on land-use outcomes without consideration for community building needs.



- Provide a strong evidence base for the need for community building to be prioritised and to be undertaken early in the planning process, in a coordinated way and to inform the land-use implications of the initiatives proposed.

- Clearly articulate a process to guide social planning for growth areas

A disconnect exists between land-use planning and social planning. There is no coherent process bringing the two together and consequently they frequently happen in isolation.



- Align the social and land-use planning processes.

- Clearly articulate a process to guide social planning for growth areas.

The comprehensiveness and relevance of data that informs social planning is extremely varied across stakeholders.



- Provide links to data and data analysis literature.

- Encourage consistent data collection, trend identification and evaluation over time in order to build strong evidence bases for social planning particularly because we are often planning for communities that do not exist yet.

Issue:

What the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool will do:

The community building initiatives of stakeholders occur in isolation. Partnership and innovation exist but it is ad hoc and results from the work of innovative individuals and organisations, rather than through a clearly defined mechanism that encourages collaboration and pooling of resources.

- Align the efforts of stakeholders involved in community building and ensure that the right stakeholders are around the table at the right time.
- Provide stakeholders with appropriate information so that they understand the planning system and how they can be involved at different stages of the process.
- Encourage innovative ways to deliver initiatives, partner and pool resources.
- Provide a comprehensive database of models of good practice that have been implemented and evaluated.

Social planning often happens too late in the process of planning for a new community. This can lead to missed opportunities for the timely and appropriate delivery of services and infrastructure and the opportunity for taking a preventative approach rather than a reactive one once social issues arise.

- Clearly articulate a timely social planning process with a focus on universal and preventative programs, services and infrastructure.

Hard infrastructure such as roads and drainage is typically prioritised while the community building infrastructure such as community, sport and recreation is perceived as more discretionary.

- Articulate the services and programs that are required for community building that will create a strong evidence base to inform advocacy for community infrastructure provision alongside other important infrastructure.
- Encourage innovative ways to deliver identified initiatives including community infrastructure.

A lack of a clearly defined social planning process with a lead agency taking carriage of the process, can result in community building being developer controlled and led. The outcomes that developers seek from such activities are often different to the outcomes that councils seek in regard to community building.

- Reinforce Council's role as the lead stakeholder in social planning for new communities, beginning with a joined-up process within Council itself.
- Provide stakeholders with appropriate information so they understand the planning system and how they can be involved at different stages of the process.

A number of issues can prevent NGOs from participating in long-term strategic planning around service delivery.

- Articulate a partnership model to address key stakeholder issues and to encourage innovative ways to deliver initiatives, partner and pool resources.

Funding is generally focused at the tertiary end of the spectrum to address acute needs rather than on prevention.

- Provide a strong evidence-base to assist in advocating for more access to funding for preventative programs and services.

What are we trying to achieve for new communities with this Tool?

In planning for new communities, an articulation is needed of what it is we are aiming for in regard to the wellbeing of individuals and communities. There is wide-ranging research on this topic and many models exist. This project is built on two key guidelines in Victoria:

1. The Metropolitan Planning Authority's *A Strategic Framework for Creating Liveable Communities* ¹
2. *The Victorian Community Wellbeing Framework* ²

The outcomes that the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool aims to achieve and what this might look like in a community is illustrated below.

The goal

Communities that are:

- Healthy, safe and inclusive
- Culturally rich and vibrant
- Democratic with active citizens that participate in decision-making

Prevention programs

Play groups
Gender equity
Financial literacy
Parenting programs

Community connection

Street parties
Walking groups
Arts/cultural activities
Community gardens
Social media and neighbourhood websites

Civic involvement

Advocacy
Volunteering
Civic placemaking
Residents association
Community engagement in planning and policy decisions

Social innovation

Social enterprise
Farmers markets
Life-long learning

Research shows that community networks made through participation... ³

- Increase individual and family wellbeing including health, psychological wellbeing, positive parenting, child development, education and employment outcomes and positive ageing
- Generate positive social practices including the spread of information and innovation, inclusive attitudes and respect, control of negative behaviours, feelings of safety and collective efficacy
- Create strong community planning
- Allow equitable distribution of community resources, turning assets into outcomes

FOOTNOTES

- 1 *A Strategic Framework for Creating Liveable Communities* (2008, Growth Areas Authority) established four essential components of liveable communities: 1) high-quality job opportunities and a thriving local economy, 2) healthy, safe, and socially connected communities, 3) affordable living, 4) sustainable, natural built environments. The second component is the focus of the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool.
- 2 *The Victorian Community Wellbeing Framework* is a local model for measuring community wellbeing indicators. It covers five domains of community wellbeing: 1) healthy, safe and inclusive communities, 2) culturally rich and vibrant communities, 3) healthy democracy and active citizens, 4) dynamic, resilient and fair economies, 5) sustainable built- and natural-environments. The Growth Areas Social Planning Tool focuses on the first three domains.
- 3 Source: *Indicators of Community Strength: framework and evidence*. Pope, 2011, DPCD

How does the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool work?

The Tool has been developed as a mechanism for local governments to coordinate social planning in growth areas. It recognises local government's unique understanding of these communities and their on-the-ground role in community building. Although local governments will be the primary users of the Tool, state and federal governments have a critical enabling role and the not-for-profit sector, developers and the community are also vital contributors to community building.

Ongoing data capture

- Consistent data capture across growth area councils that is used to inform a needs analysis for community building

Manage the process

- Assign a project manager within local government
- Facilitate collaboration between relevant departments within council
- Identify, engage and collaborate with key stakeholders, including the community

Create an evidence base (needs analysis)

- Identify key policy and research directions
- Collate quantitative data
- Collate qualitative data
- Consolidate and synthesise the information to identify needs

In order to be dynamic, flexible and meet the needs of various stakeholders, it was agreed that the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool will be web-based. The Tool guides users through the social planning process, as summarised below.

Plan the community building initiatives

- A collaborative response (partnerships, funding models, other innovations)
- The types of community building initiatives:
 - Community connection
 - Capacity building
 - Preventative services and programs
 - Civic involvement
 - Social innovation

Evaluating and updating the approach as the community grows

- Engaging with and building capacity in the new community
- Evaluating initiatives
- Capturing data about the community and using this data to adapt community building initiatives accordingly

Each component of the Tool can be read and applied as a stand-alone section. It also provides supporting information and resources such as templates, examples and case studies as well as an explanation of the process for delivering new communities in Victoria. It is regularly updated with new information and resources.

How will adoption of the Tool impact the way that we plan new communities?

In order for the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool to be embedded as the consistent, coordinated approach to community building, a commitment is needed amongst stakeholders to make some changes in the current process of planning for new communities.

This section details the changes that are needed if the Tool is to be embedded into the planning system.

Embedding the Growth Areas Social Planning Tool into the planning system requires:

Building on the Precinct Structure Planning process

- A mechanism is introduced that triggers social planning early enough so that it can align with, and inform precinct structure planning.
- The community infrastructure investigations undertaken to inform precinct structure plans are broadened to encompass community building needs.
- Council is the lead agency in applying the Tool.

(The way that the Tool builds on the precinct structure planning process is illustrated overleaf).

Changes in local government's approach

Adopting the Tool will require councils to:

- Commit to developing a consistent process for capturing and collating data to inform community needs.
- Engage the appropriate stakeholders (of which the community is one) from the beginning of the process.
- Undertake a coordinated planning process that ensures the best outcomes resulting from collective knowledge and a collaborative response to community needs.
- Remain on the 'front foot' in regard to maintaining an evidence base so that community building needs can be identified and articulated in a timely manner.
- Monitor communities over time, capture this valuable data and adapt community building initiatives as the community's needs and capacity evolve over time.

The Growth Areas Social Planning Tool

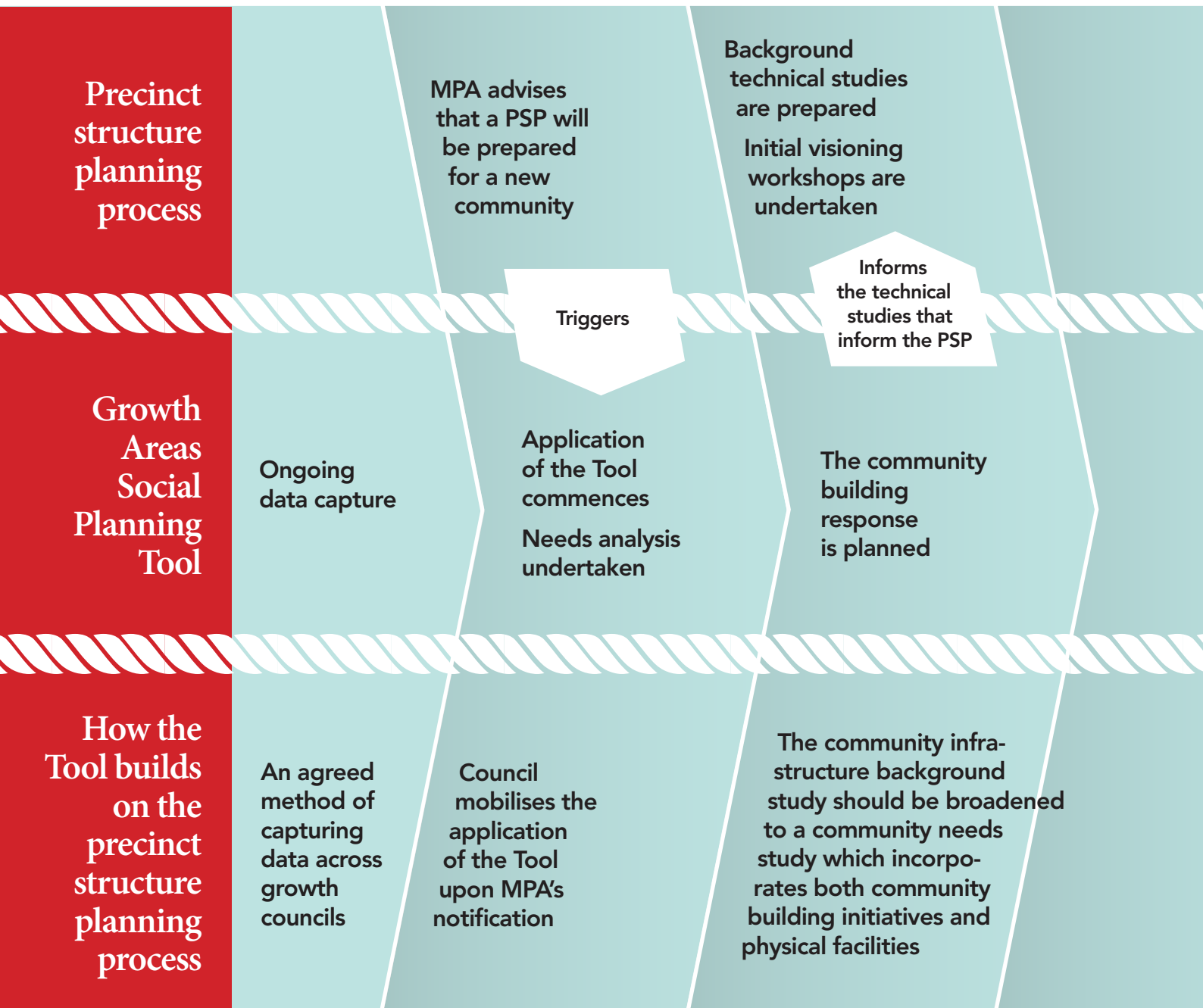
Changes in state government's approach

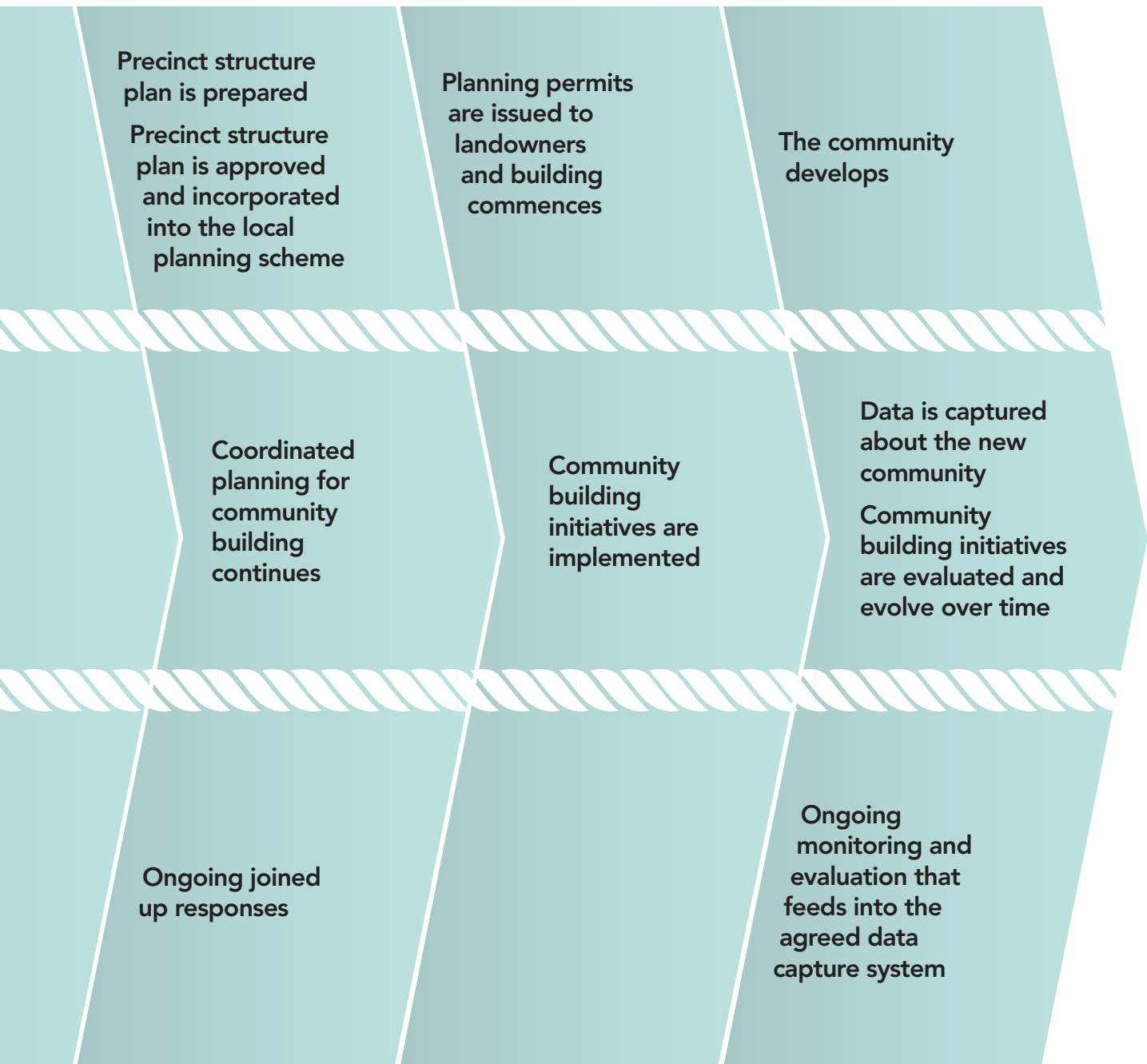
- Endorsement of the GASPT by all levels of government and an authorising environment for application of GASPT.
- Integration of policies across different levels of government.
- Development of population based indicators to inform funding decisions.
- Setting targets for community outcomes.
- Innovative funding models that enable collaborative planning.

Changes to how other stakeholders work within the system

- Increased collaboration around planning and delivery.
- Increasing awareness amongst developers in regard to partnering and delivery options.

How does the Tool align with the precinct structure planning process?







The Growth Areas Social Planning Tool