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Professor Roz Hansen
Chair, Ministerial Advisory Committee
Metropolitan Planning Strategy
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Dear Professor Hansen

**METROPOLITAN PLANNING STRATEGY DISCUSSION PAPER – COMMENTS
FROM THE HERITAGE COUNCIL OF VICTORIA**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the discussion paper for the new Metropolitan Planning Strategy for Melbourne - Melbourne, let's talk about the future (October 2012). The Heritage Council would like to thank you and Chris Gallagher for your very useful and informative briefings on the process of preparing the Metropolitan Strategy.

The Heritage Council welcomes many of the sentiments expressed in the discussion paper, especially its recognition of the role of sound strategic planning and investment in public infrastructure and quality urban design in producing an attractive and distinctive city.

'Principle 1: A distinctive Melbourne', clearly recognises the role that our heritage has played and should continue to play in the development of the city:

Throughout its history, Melbourne has responded to new challenges and opportunities by building on the best of the past, looking to the future and developing its own unique identity. It is recognised by residents and visitors as a city with a unique character.

The Central City and inner parts of Melbourne have a legacy of memorable spaces and distinctive main streets. People are justifiably proud of these areas, but parts of middle and outer Melbourne have not been designed or managed to meet their full potential. Melbourne can build on its tradition of good design and reinforce local distinctiveness to create many more attractive places to meet community expectations.

The enclosed comments focus on heritage issues raised in the discussion paper.

The Heritage Council also believes that it is imperative to retain, celebrate and build on the best of the past in planning for the future of metropolitan Melbourne. The Council is concerned that there is a risk that some of the proposals in the discussion paper, if carried through without appropriate attention to heritage conservation, may result in a loss of significant heritage fabric and, importantly, a loss of opportunities to create distinctive new places for the future community of Melbourne.

The Council would be happy to assist with specific advice regarding heritage during the preparation of the draft strategy and intends to undertake substantial further work to prepare a detailed response to the draft.

Yours sincerely


Daryl Jackson
Chair

11 FEB 2013

MELBOURNE METROPOLITAN STRATEGY DISCUSSION PAPER – COMMENTS FROM THE HERITAGE COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

A Framework for Innovation

The section makes some excellent points about providing clear guidance on the type of city that Melbourne should be by 2050 and the need to leave room for innovation and creativity, while limiting change in areas that should be preserved. Council welcomes the commitment to a partnership approach that takes into account a bottom-up view of issues, based on local experience and the distinctiveness of Melbourne's urban villages and suburbs.

Principle 1: A Distinctive Melbourne

Council believes that more explicit recognition of the role of heritage places, including privately owned properties, in establishing and maintaining the character and distinctiveness of the city is justified, beyond the acknowledged characteristics of the 'great Victorian city' (p 14).

Urban Structure and Place

Page 14 also notes the value Melburnians place on the leafy green suburbs. Council supports proposals to direct development in these localities into more targeted areas, with a clearer definition of the scale of change intended.

Revitalisation and Renewal

This section stresses the positive effects that can be achieved through urban renewal. It poses questions about how the State Government and Local Government Authorities can balance preservation and revitalisation in suburban areas and how areas for revitalisation should be selected.

As a result of the structure and administrative provisions of the *Heritage Act 1995*, which lead to a focus on individual places, there are very few precincts or broader urban areas listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. It is therefore not possible to point to defined areas of urban built form and landscape that are identified as being of state heritage significance. Council does, however, consider that many such areas exist.

In the absence of a state designation, Council believes that considerable weight should be placed on area-based Heritage Overlays in local planning schemes to identify places where revitalisation should seek to retain much of the existing building stock, as well as providing guidance on the scale and pattern of redevelopment.

The discussion paper also suggests that:

Urban renewal and regeneration in areas such as Fishermans Bend, North Melbourne, Docklands and former industrial areas close to the Central City have the capacity to increase the city centre's attractiveness as a whole and increase Melbourne's competitive position in the global economy.

Urban renewal through a mix of renovation, cultural and artistic regeneration, commercial development and land use incentives is one of the best ways to revitalise urban neighbourhoods.

Fishermans Bend, North Melbourne, former industrial areas close to the central city and even the undeveloped parts of Docklands contain many significant heritage assets, particularly industrial and maritime heritage places. Experience in Docklands (and Southbank) to date indicates that many opportunities were wasted to recycle and reuse existing buildings that could have provided a much more interesting and fine-grained urban form than that which has been achieved.

Strategies for new urban renewal areas should learn the lessons from Docklands and Southbank and seek to combine sensitive urban conservation/conversion of industrial and residential fabric with new development, to preserve heritage assets and use them to develop a sense of place for new residents. Particular attention will need to be paid to planning the public realm – streets, parks and walking/cycling routes – to avoid creating ground-level environments that are hostile to people.

As shown by research recently commissioned by the Heritage Council on behalf of the heritage bodies in all States and the Commonwealth, conservation of existing structures also has major benefits in terms of retention of the energy embodied in building materials

Roads as Features of the Public Realm

The Heritage Council supports, in principle, the idea of creating new boulevards (p.16 and p.62) to enhance the character and amenity of the city. However, if this proposal is to be implemented in existing urban areas, extreme care will be required to ensure that it does not lead to loss of significant heritage fabric or of places that are valued by local communities.

Planning for Parks and Waterways

The Heritage Council welcomes recent Government initiatives to protect the Yarra and Maribyrnong river corridors and supports the discussion paper's suggestion (p.18) that consideration should be given to extending these controls to other waterways. The Merri Creek might be one place to start, along with other waterways in the growth corridors. State planning policies for development along the foreshores of Port Phillip Bay, in particular, could also be contemplated.

Council endorses recognition of the contribution major Metropolitan parks make to the environmental and lifestyle values of the city. Council is aware that further extensions to the Metropolitan parks system have been earmarked in planning for growth corridors.

The Heritage Council encourages the declaration and enhancement of these areas and identification of others as part of the heritage of future generations.

Principle 2: A Globally Connected and Competitive City

Embracing Innovation in the Private Sector

The Heritage Council has some concerns with the proposal to allow private interest to initiate innovative projects even if they are not contemplated by current planning controls (p.24).

The Heritage Council believes that the Metropolitan Strategy will need to set out clear evaluation criteria by which such proposals will be assessed, to ensure transparency and net community benefit and the protection of heritage assets.

Principle 4: Strong Communities

The elements identified as underpinning strong communities (p.32) include people having 'influence over the future and what matters to them' and the community having 'local qualities that people value'. Council believes that heritage makes a significant contribution to the valued local qualities of places and that most people value having a say about the likely scale of neighbourhood change.

Principle 5: Environmental Resilience & Idea 10: Improving the Environmental Performance of Suburbs

Heritage Council endorses the need for more energy and water-efficient urban design and for retrofitting existing buildings. As mentioned above, Council has recently commissioned research on heritage places and sustainability. These studies recognise

the quantity of energy embodied in building materials, but also demonstrate that it is relatively easy and cost-effective to improve the energy and water-conservation performance of historic buildings. Council also supports the idea of increasing the tree cover in the city, but notes that climate change will have implications for the type and pattern of future plantings (as discussed in the City of Melbourne's *Urban Forest Strategy 2012*).

Principle 6: A Polycentric City Linked to Regional Cities

Idea 3: Unlocking Capacity in Established Suburbs

Council strongly supports the idea of comprehensive documentation of the landscape and urban qualities (including heritage values) of metropolitan Melbourne, as a starting point for determining where change should be encouraged in established suburbs.

Idea 5: Strengthening the Green Edge to Melbourne

Council also supports the concept of strengthening the green edge to Melbourne (p.58). Council believes this would assist in maintaining landscapes with significant heritage values, such as the Dandenong Ranges, the Yarra Valley, the Macedon Ranges and parts of the Mornington Peninsula. The Heritage Council is currently revising its guidelines on identification of such landscapes.

Idea 6: Building a State of Cities

Council is concerned that the discussion paper seems to be suggesting that regional towns (other than the major provincial cities) may primarily become dormitory locations that will service Melbourne, rather than recognising the need to generate additional employment and economic activity in these locations that will help maintain the essential heritage and identity of these locations.

Council believes that most of the medium-sized towns and cities within 1.5 hours of Melbourne will come under strong pressure for development and local government requires support to ensure that the heritage and character of these places is identified and protected while appropriate growth takes place.

Principle 7: Living Locally - A '20 minute' City

Idea 9: Providing Diverse Housing in the Right Locations

Council believes that the consequences of residential redevelopment in some established areas far exceed concerns about 'the impact of villa units on suburban streets' (p.viii)

The detailed discussion (p.34) points out that there are ways of increasing housing density without undermining the valued characteristics of local areas and the Metropolitan Strategy will need to ensure that this occurs.

