BAYSIDE

BOROONDARA

GLEN EIRA

KINGSTON

Inner South Metropolitan
Mayor's Forum

INNER SOUTH
REGIONAL ADVOCACY
PRIORITIES 2022–2023

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

The Inner South Metropolitan Mayor's Forum acknowledges the Boonwurrung/Bunurong and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation as Traditional Owners' and Custodians, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and uphold Traditional Owners continuing relationship to the land and waterways. We extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

From the Mayors

The Inner South Metropolitan Mayor's Forum (ISMMF) was formed to advocate for the policy reforms that matter to our municipalities of Bayside, Boroondara, Glen Eira and Kingston.

We look beyond our own municipal boundaries to identify shared regional priorities that are important to our communities.

Our municipalities face common challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic will have a lasting impact on our economies as we face rising cost of living pressures and seek to provide high-quality services for our rapidly increasing and diversifying populations. But these challenges are not ours to face alone.

Working together in partnership is the key to building a brighter future for Melbourne's inner south.

That is why we are pleased to present our priority policy positions around the critical areas of:
> improving the state planning system;
> creating new open space;
> supplying and funding more social and affordable housing; and
> delivering a more sustainable funding model for maternal and child health services.

We are united in calling for immediate policy reforms in these four critical areas. We call on a future Victorian Government to act decisively to address these community concerns.

With a shared voice, we have put forward actionable outcomes which would bring about tangible change and enhanced co-operation between our levels of government.

Mayor, Cr Alex Del Porto
Mayor, Bayside City Council

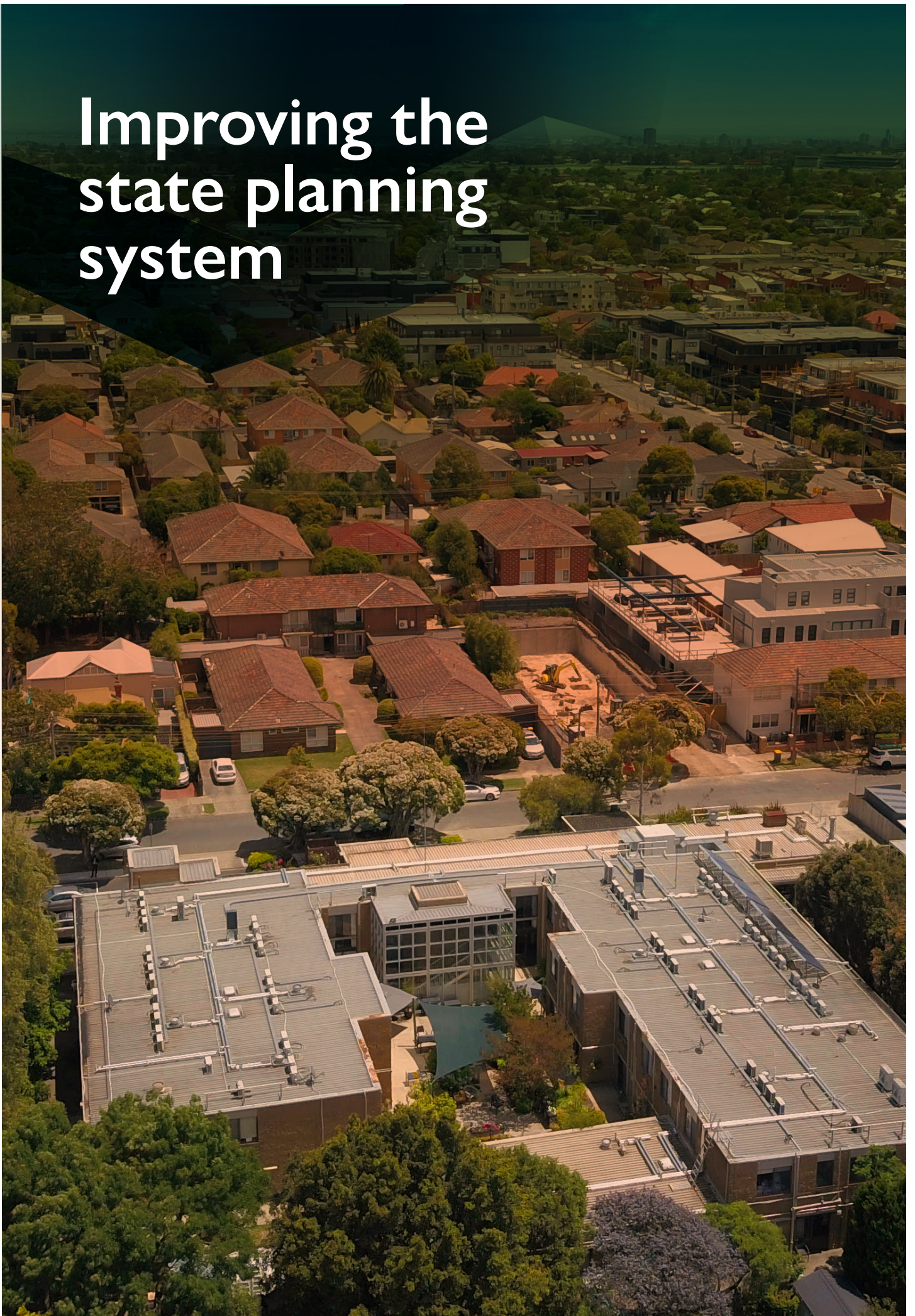Cr Jane Addis
Mayor, Boroondara City Council

Cr Jim Magee
Mayor, Glen Eira City Council

Cr Steve Staikos
Mayor, Kingston City Council

Improving the
state planning
system

Improving the state planning system

The opportunity

The Victorian Government is implementing significant changes to the planning system through the *Planning Reform Program 2020–2024*, which will reduce the involvement of Council and local communities in many planning matters and erode the integrity and efficiency of the well-established system.

The situation

The Victorian Government has already introduced a number of changes that have reduced the community's third-party public notice and appeal rights, and Council's role as responsible planning authority. Many of these changes have been implemented with limited or no engagement with Local Government.

Local Government is well placed to manage all planning matters, particularly in Melbourne's inner south. These councils have the resources, knowledge, and systems to understand and respond to the community needs and to achieve the most appropriate outcomes.

It is never acceptable to undertake consultation with individually selected councils, on different parts of the reform program, and use confidentiality agreements to prevent Council officers from speaking with their elected representatives.

This has happened in the development of new legislation, policies and programs. It has also happened in individual development proposals such as Victorian Government infrastructure projects, like the Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP) and the North East Link.

The ISMMF's concerns are:

Development facilitation program: The program was introduced as an accelerated assessment and determination process for eligible development projects provided by the Victorian Government, initially to support economic recovery following COVID-19.

This takes the planning process away from Local Government for many projects but still obligates Local Government to implement and support these developments to ensure that they integrate with many of the services and assets Local Government provides.

The new process has failed to create a more streamlined approach to planning assessment and has created more confusion over the statutory approval requirements. This program was implemented without an explanation for why it was needed.

New planning rules: Recent changes provide a streamlined path for government projects (such as major transport projects, school projects and social housing). However, the ability for Local Government and the community to provide genuine input into the process is significantly reduced or removed.

While there may be merit in a streamlined process for key projects such as social housing, council should remain the decision-maker. Councils that have had experience with 'fast track' processes for redundant government land, LXRPs and golf course rezoning understand the need to evaluate how effective processes are before making changes. We would welcome the opportunity to participate in such a review.

Improving the state planning system

ResCode discussion paper: The paper outlines a proposal to increase prescription for residential development assessments and restrict the ability of councils to consider existing local characteristics including local neighbourhood character policies.

Digital planning reform: Victorian Government funding to digitise the planning system and develop online tools has been disconnected from what the industry needs and wants. The changes have eroded usability. There is no clear and timely pathway to a consistent and comprehensive state-based digital planning platform for Local Government or the development industry.

Environmentally sustainable design (ESD) in the planning scheme: A suite of standard state controls has lagged and is not in-line with the planned roadmap, nor achieving the desired environmental outcomes.

Only high-level state policy direction has been introduced into planning schemes. This has left councils to develop their own specific policies and requirements. This leads to a significant duplication of effort, lack of consistency across councils and poorer environmental outcomes for the community.

A number of councils are working with the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) to prepare new scheme provisions for ESD, but this should be urgently developed by the Victorian Government.

Tree and vegetation controls: Changes are needed to protect vegetation as the Building Regulations 2018 supersede many Local Government local laws that protect against the removal of vegetation. The metropolitan-wide tree and vegetation controls that have been promised by the Victorian Government have not been delivered and need urgent attention.

What we need

We need meaningful consultation with Local Government and the community on any proposed reforms before the reforms are considered or introduced. Community consultation must remain an integral consideration for planning decisions, especially for major planning matters. The community's voice is critical to ensure a transparent planning system which strengthens local neighbourhoods and economies.

We are advocating for:

> a streamlined pathway to develop local residential schedules in zones and overlays to recognise local neighbourhood character strategies as part of the ResCode changes;

> a commitment to a state-based digital planning application platform for all councils (including a roadmap and clear timings on delivery);

> new metropolitan-wide ESD controls in the planning scheme which deliver a net zero carbon development industry; and

> a commitment to state-based vegetation protection controls (including a roadmap and clear timings on delivery).

Creating new open space

Creating new open space

The opportunity

There is an immediate opportunity for investment across the Bayside, Boroondara, Kingston and Glen Eira municipalities. Each Council is expecting significant population growth by 2036, and we need to plan now to ensure there are enough parks and open space through innovative projects and partnerships with the Australian and Victorian Governments. During COVID-19, we saw the increased importance of parks and open space for local populations and the health benefits of embedding 20-minute neighbourhoods, where people can meet most of their daily needs within a 20-minute return walk from home.

The situation

Our planning approach is improving, and we understand better than ever the importance of parks and open space. We've created structure plans, undertaken park master-planning and housing strategies. For genuinely integrated local planning, we also need a pipeline of new open space opportunities.

Local Government is at the frontline of delivering the Victorian Government's *Open Space for Everyone* strategy and the outcomes of the draft *Regional Land Use Framework Plans*. Whenever we see large infrastructure projects proposed in our municipalities, open space is invariably the number one community priority.

It's increasingly difficult for Local Government alone to increase open space provision. This is because:

• the cost of creating new open spaces is increasing, with inflation, increasing property values and ballooning cost of materials and labour;

• some state transport projects reduce open space, such as the North East Link Project, which will result in the loss of seven hectares of open space;

• the funding we receive through the *Subdivision Act* isn't going as far to purchase land for open space;

• 'build to rent' projects often aren't subdivided — creating more demand with fewer returns; and

• housing prices are a barrier to increasing contributions over new development targeted toward open space.

To create new open space, we need a genuine commitment to investment and partnership from the Victorian Government at the building and construction phase. This would expedite the

Creating new open space

development of new open space and allow continued investment by Local Government at other locations.

We have welcomed a range of initiatives so far from the Victorian Government, including:

- the *Local Parks Program*, which boosts our funding commitments to allow us to deliver open space in areas like Moorabbin (Horscroft Place Park), Bentleigh (Eat Street), Caulfield South (Aileen Avenue Park), and Carnegie (revitalising Rosanna Street Reserve);

- incorporating new open space into Level Crossing Removal Projects, expanding the number of shared user path networks and creating new play spaces in activity nodes; and

- partnering with local sporting clubs, demonstrating the importance of non-government partnerships in creating new open space.

As well as the continuation of these initiatives, Bayside, Boroondara, Kingston and Glen Eira City Councils are calling for the Victorian Government to put in place a higher minimum public space requirement as part of any state-approved planning proposal.

We are also calling for greater involvement in Victorian Government planning decisions in our municipalities, so we can work together to identify and invest in new open spaces. Shifting our focus to investment in open space at a broader scale will provide a significant legacy opportunity for our municipalities.

IMSSF councils have worked together to identify the specific priority projects that will make the biggest difference for our communities. These are projects that need the support of the Victorian Government, such as:

Implementation of the Chain of Parks Project: The former extractive industry and landfilling precinct in Kingston is identified through Public Acquisition Overlays (PAOs) for new and much needed regional parkland. The critical opportunity presented through this project is to provide much needed regional sporting facilities closer to all member councils to address an existing shortfall across several sports. Kingston has a very clear plan to realise this opportunity that has broad stakeholder support.

Transforming Yalukit Willam Nature Reserve (formerly Elsternwick Park Nature Reserve): Bayside, with support from the City of Port Phillip and the Australian Government, is transforming the former 9-hole golf course in Brighton into a conservation reserve and wetland. The project is part of a $24 million masterplan to turn the reserve into a unique oasis for people and nature, just 10 kilometres from the Melbourne CBD. A chain of ponds opened in July 2022 under stage 1, but this is just the first stage in the masterplan. State investment in the conservation reserve will accelerate this project of regional significance and achieve major biodiversity gains.

Increasing open space in Boroondara: Eleven residential areas within Boroondara have been identified as needing new open spaces. These can only be provided by acquiring private properties. Boroondara's river and creek biodiversity and

Creating new open space

access corridors are broken by private properties. These properties could be subdivided to provide continuous open spaces alongside these significant assets. This would require creation of PAOs or direction land purchases.

Creating new open space at Caulfield Racecourse Reserve: Creating new community infrastructure on Crown land at the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve, by creating a reliable funding stream for the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust (CRRT) to progress the open space initiatives of the *Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Land Management Plan*. The 54 hectare Caulfield Racecourse Reserve is in the heart of the Caulfield Activity Centre, has long been identified as a missed opportunity for open space and broad community use.

What we need

We need more funding to support the development of open space for our municipalities in Melbourne's most rapidly growing inner and middle areas.

We are advocating for:

> partnering with us to create foundation park and open space infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing populations;

> higher minimum public space requirements as part of any state-approved planning proposal;

> greater Local Government involvement in Victorian Government planning decisions in our municipalities;

> investing more in funding programs like the *Local Parks Program* to create opportunities for councils to develop new open space, for the long-term health and wellbeing of our communities; and

> embedding stronger commitments on key strategic open space initiatives as priority 'implementation initiatives' in the final adopted versions of the *Regional Land Use Framework Plans*.

Supplying and funding social and affordable housing
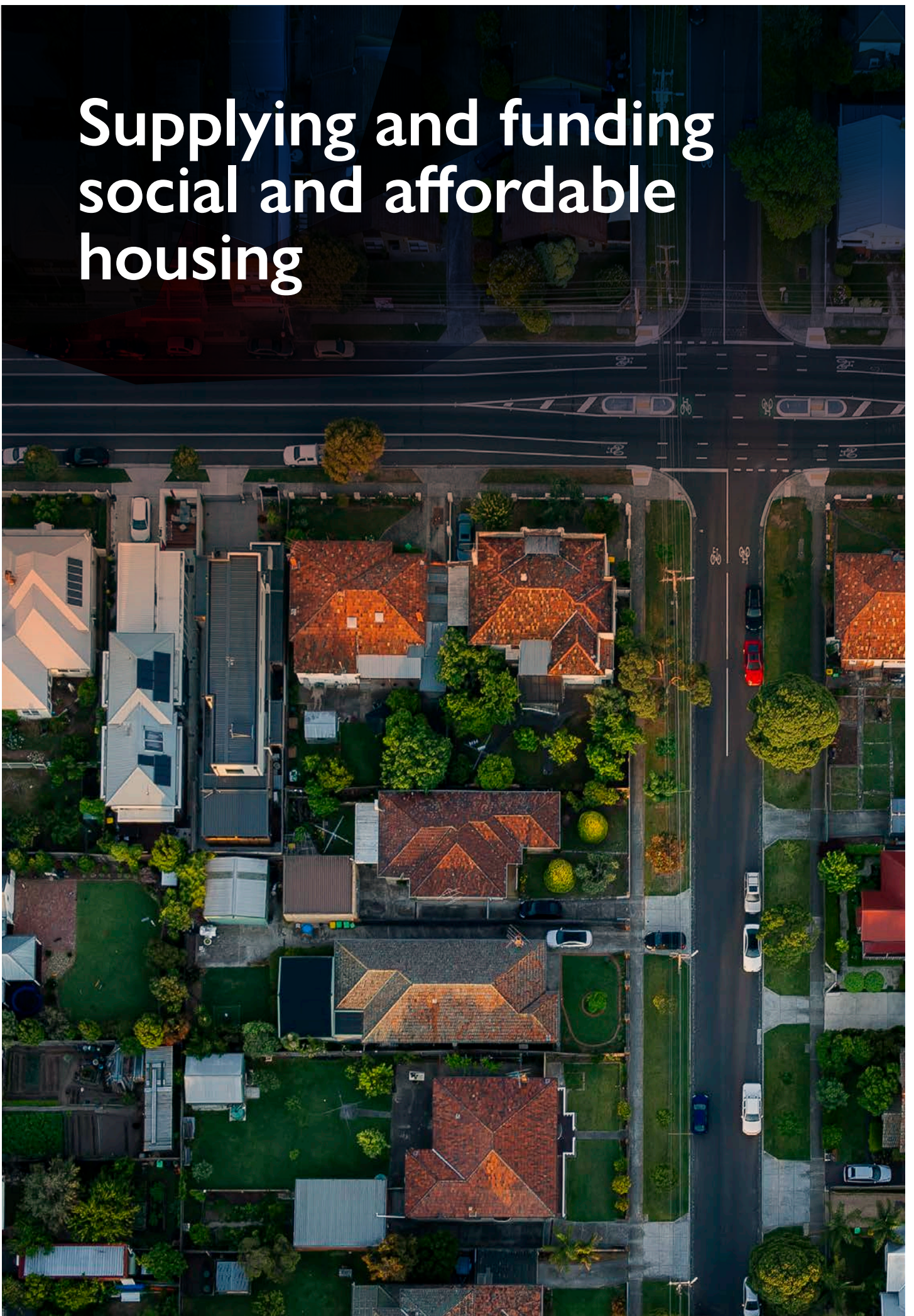
Supplying and funding social and affordable housing

The opportunity

Significant population growth, cost of living pressures and a strong property market are creating a housing crisis with long-term pressure on housing affordability and access across the inner south region. More Victorians than ever before are currently on waiting lists for social housing, with increasing levels of homelessness and housing insecurity.

The investment allocated to address the pressure currently experienced by the system, after years of neglect, is insufficient and heavily reliant on Local Government investment. This adds to the increasingly financially challenging environment as more responsibilities and demands are added to the Local Government agenda. Much of the region's social housing stock is ageing and needs significant investment to deliver contemporary housing solutions.

A national housing strategy and an increase in Australian Government funding are needed to address the housing crisis.

The situation

The Victorian Government must increase the supply and funding for social and affordable housing in the inner south metropolitan community. This will ensure that housing is accessible and of an acceptable standard and quality for those in need within the region.

Social and affordable housing developments contribute towards improved social inclusion, mobility and access to jobs. This is a key element of maintaining income equality and sustainable economic growth.

The Victorian Government's *Big Housing Build* is aimed at addressing the social housing crisis through a large spending commitment of $5.3 billion. This funding is spread across several programs, but specific concerns on the program to date include:

Minimal uplift: The minor 10 per cent uplift in social and affordable housing provided on *Big Housing Build* sites is a failure to maximise the significant opportunities created by the program.

Contribution from private development: There is a lack of an affordable contribution by private development towards social and affordable housing.

Supporting infrastructure improvements: Community infrastructure improvements and infrastructure upgrades are generally not considered within *Big Housing Build* project scopes. This results in Local Government needing to find more resources to support local infrastructure and assets upgrades, to meet demand and community needs.

Responsiveness to planning controls: *Big Housing Build* developments have not commonly responded to established planning policy and zoning controls. Meaningful consultation with the community and

Supplying and funding social and affordable housing

Local Governments must be integral to maximise the benefit of new housing to strengthen local communities, neighbourhoods and economies.

Outsourcing to the private sector: The delivery and running of social housing by the private sector as part of the *Big Housing Build* carries significant risks. This includes maintaining the level of control needed to achieve the intended outcome, losing visibility of the intended beneficiaries' needs, and impacting on the quality of service being provided to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

What we need

We need the Victorian Government to take steps to maximise the potential benefit of the *Big Housing Build* and meet the need for social and affordable housing in the inner south region.

We are advocating for:

> increasing the uplift in social and affordable dwellings by a minimum of 50 per cent on *Big Housing Build* projects (eg. 10 existing dwellings should be redeveloped to provide 15 social and affordable dwellings on the site, along with other private housing);

> changing Victorian's planning schemes to include new mandatory criteria for developers to contribute funding and/or dwellings for affordable housing through the inclusionary zone provisions and *Homes for Homes*, or similar contribution programs where inclusionary zone provision is not applicable;

> adhering to relevant planning controls associated with building heights, setbacks and other controls on any *Big Housing Build* development;

> directing government investment and subsidies to encourage private investment in social and affordable housing;

> incorporating affordable housing in Victorian Government projects across the inner south, including at 'value capture' developments generated by opportunities created by level crossing removal or other state property acquisitions; and

> considering upfront the impact on existing infrastructure from increased density created by *Big Housing Build* investments and the resulting uplift in site values, to ensure community and infrastructure needs are addressed.

Delivering sustainable Maternal and Child Health services

Delivering sustainable Maternal and Child Health services

The opportunity

Victorian Government funding for the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service is based on an outdated funding model and has not kept pace with the increasing costs of delivering the service. The Victorian Government contributes less than its 50 per cent share of funding to deliver the service. This impacts the sustainability of the service and its ability to provide support at critical life stages for children and parents.

Critical workforce shortages are impacting councils' ability to deliver the service and there is no state-wide workforce strategy.

The situation

The Victorian MCH Service is a critical service for families with young children. It provides free, universally accessible, state-wide health and wellbeing and development support for all families with children from birth to school age.

As well as providing general guidance and support, MCH nurses play a critical role in early intervention where there are concerns about health and development. MCH nurses refer families to more specialised support to prevent them worsening and to improve outcomes for young children.

Inadequate funding

Local Governments and the Victorian Government have an agreed partnership to equally share the cost of the MCH Service so Local Governments can deliver it to their community.

While the funding is meant to be a 50:50 split, Local Governments contribute more than 50 per cent of the funding required. The Victorian Government contributes just $123.85 per hour of service, and Local Government contributes $142.79 per hour of service. The State Government needs to increase its contribution by 15 per cent to return to 50:50 funding (source: Municipal Association of Victoria, 2022).

This is because:

- the funding model has not kept pace with increased costs of delivering the service, due to increasing vulnerability and family complexity in all communities;

- the funding model is based on historical demand for the service but should be based on projected population. Adequate, flexible, and sustained

Delivering sustainable Maternal and Child Health services

funding is needed to continue to deliver an MCH Service that responds to contemporary families' needs; and

• a review of Key Ages and Stages consultation times is required and should be undertaken alongside a funding review. Consultation times need to be increased to adequately hear from and respond to families' needs; and to cater for the cumulative increases in responsibilities added to the MCH Service since the *Key Age and Stage Framework* was introduced over a decade ago.

Workforce strategy

The Victorian Maternal and Child Health Service is unique in Australia, requiring nurses to be a registered nurse, registered midwife, and have a postgraduate diploma in child and family health. This requirement is now enshrined in legislation through an amendment in 2020 to the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*, but there is no state-wide workforce strategy to ensure supply of a highly specialised workforce. (Source: ANMF, 2020)

Specific issues include:

• The impact of COVID-19 on the broader health workforce has increased MCH workforce shortages, as staff report high levels of exhaustion and many choose to reduce hours or retire earlier than previously anticipated.

• Most of the workforce is employed part-time, with many nurses choosing to continue to work with hospitals to retain entitlements such as long service leave.

• Backfilling planned and unplanned leave is becoming increasingly difficult, increasing the burden on administrative staff who need to reschedule appointments, and leadership teams who need to make assessments of family need to prioritise appointments.

• Increasing family complexity and vulnerability (including rising incidence of family violence) as well as longer wait times for specialist services is placing more pressure on the MCH Service to support families and keep them engaged in the interim.

• Increased specialisation and responsiveness to service needs such as sleep and settling, lactation consultations and linkages to supported playgroups are having an increased impact on workforce availability.

• The significantly increased training and development requirements in recent years has also impacted attraction to, and retention in the sector.

Capital funding

The only Victorian Government funding available for Maternal and Child Health facilities is where the service is co-located in larger integrated hubs. Established municipalities have MCH infrastructure that is ageing and often not fit for purpose. We need more funding to upgrade existing infrastructure, to continue to meet contemporary service delivery requirements.

Delivering sustainable Maternal and Child Health services

What we need

We need the Victorian Government to work in partnership with Local Government to address issues facing the Maternal and Child Health Service.

We are advocating for the Victorian Government to:

> review the outdated funding model for the Maternal and Child Health Service and restore funding to 50:50 between councils and the Victorian Government;

> review Key Ages and Stages appointment times to increase the time allocation, to cater for the cumulative increases in the responsibilities added over the past decade and respond to increasing levels of vulnerability and complexity of families in all communities;

> establish and fund an Maternal and Child Health workforce strategy to maintain ongoing delivery of the Maternal and Child Health Service; and

> establish a capital grant funding program for Maternal and Child Health facilities.

AT A GLANCE

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH SERVICES IN MELBOURNE'S INNER SOUTH

Enrolment of infants

Bayside 100.71%
Boroondara 100%
Glen Eira 101.08%
Kingston 100%

Cost to Council per hour of service

Bayside $94.12
Boroondara $70.77
Glen Eira $84.76
Kingston $101.53

Participation of enrolled children

Bayside 79.61%
Boroondara 81.45%
Glen Eira 70.96%
Kingston 74.31%

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