Growth Area Councils Permit Assessment Health Check

From pre-application to statement of compliance

VICTORIAN PLANNING AUTHORITY

May 2019

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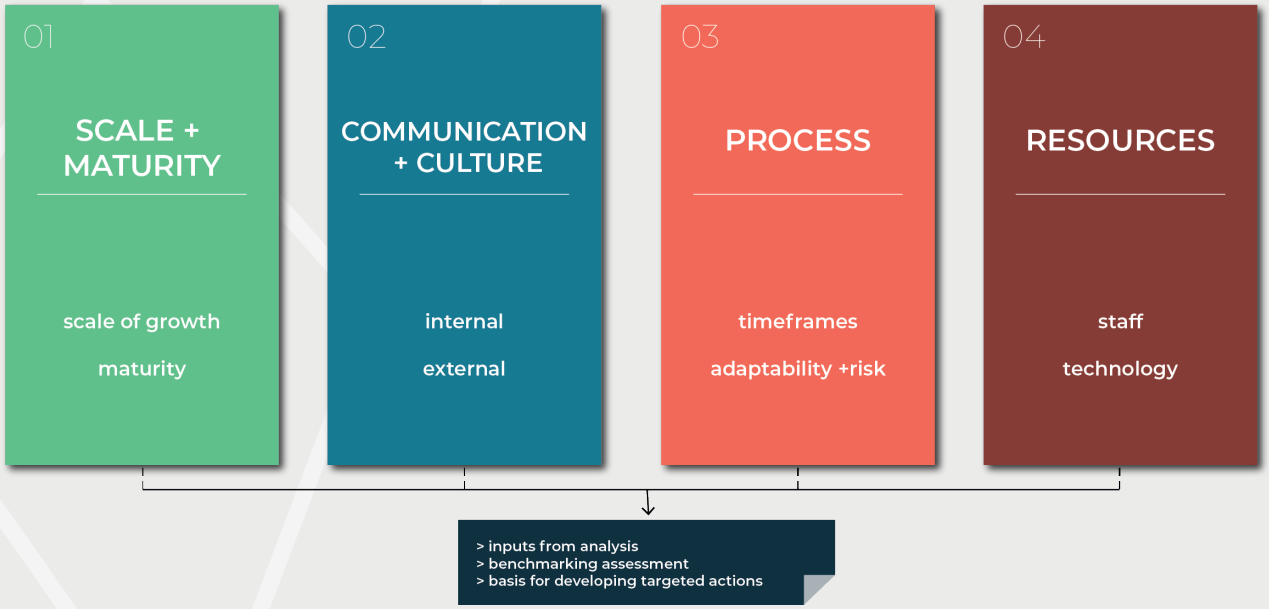
Executive Summary

Planning is becoming increasingly more complex and planning permit applications in growth areas are no exception. These permits and approvals are being tasked with proactively and reactively responding to a whole range of general and more specific issues. The complexity for a planning officer lies in bringing together a range of disciplines and expertise within Council and external referral agencies (who have varying levels of interest and understanding of the planning system) to synthesise a holistic 'whole of Council' approach.

Understandably, as the pace of development in Melbourne's growth areas increases, this complex system is creating challenges for growth area Councils. The development industry are expressing frustration with drawn out timeframes for approval, and a lack of consistency in approach across the seven growth area councils.

Mesh has undertaken a Health Check of each of the seven growth area councils, to benchmark where they sit relative to each other against a range of measures. These measures, or benchmarks, have been developed having regard to the various complexities of an organisation such as a council. Mesh has explored measures that are more qualitative, taking in the situation and cultural conditions of a council (Scale + Maturity, Communication + Culture), and measures that are more quantitative (Process + Resources).



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Key Themes

Key themes have emerged that are seen as underpinning many of the barriers to achieving swifter and better decisions.

› **Growth area planning is not a standard planning permit assessment process.**
Developers are ultimately delivering public assets. Ensuring this is undertaken in the best interests of existing and future communities requires extensive involvement of a range of parties with highly specialised skills.

› **There is a disconnect in expectations between the development industry and Council.**
While complexity of planning process has increased, there has not been a commensurate increase in the level of understanding, empathy and transparency between those that represent the 'community' (council, service authorities, government agencies) and those that implement and deliver the infrastructure for those communities (developers).

› **Lack of space for genuine negotiation and compromise.**
As planning processes have sought to standardise and simplify in the name of clarity and certainty, the space available for negotiating creative and innovative outcomes has narrowed.

› **Technology barriers at organisational level.**
Planning is becoming an increasingly more collaborative endeavour, requiring agile and open means of communication that is often facilitated by technology. While some councils have embraced the flexibility afforded by new technology, others remain bound to traditional bureaucratic approaches to technology and communication.

› **Skills and expertise shortage.**
Getting skilled planners, engineers and associated fields into growth areas (and ensuring they stay there) is a persistent challenge. While distance is a barrier that is difficult to overcome, the poor reputation of growth area planning amongst 'anti-sprawl' graduates can and should be addressed.

Mesh has explored each phase of the growth area planning permit assessment process, from pre-application to statement of compliance, to identify where delays are occurring, and where actions can be targeted taking into consideration the context of each council. While there are opportunities for minor time savings at all stages of the process, the key areas of delay are the 'Referrals and Further Information' and 'Plan Approvals' stages. These stages require consultation with and negotiation between a range of internal and external parties before arriving at a decision.

The action plans developed for each council seek to address the causes of these delays, by improving transparency, clarifying roles and expectations of various parties, and building a greater sense of trust between councils and the development industry.

Some actions are best undertaken as a collective of growth area councils, whilst others are best undertaken by the individual council.

Council Context

All councils are different.

Pre-application

Different expectations between developers and Councils

Lodgement + Allocation

Some potential easy wins for speeding up processes

Referrals + Further Information

Key source of delays – circular internal referrals + delayed external referrals

Permit Assessment

Opportunities to improve decision-making practices + transparency

Certification

Some uncertainty + external agencies creating delays

Plan Approvals

Another source of delays – circular referrals and resubmissions

Statement of Compliance

Opportunities to improve accountability for more efficient sign off

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Certification	Certification is carried out by councils to ensure the subdivision plan complies with the technical aspects of subdividing land in Victoria.
Construction Plan	Construction plans provide the detailed engineering design to guide development. They are required to be assessed and approved by council prior to commencement of construction.
Delegate Reports	An inhouse council report that describes the proposal, the relevant policies and planning scheme requirements, the assessment process, objections, referrals and comments. The officer makes a recommendation on whether a permit should be granted.
Developer Contribution Plans (DCP)	DCP identify high order infrastructure (land and works) that is required to be provided to meet the future needs of the community. The cost of this infrastructure is distributed across the growth area, and paid by developers either as a cash contribution or as 'works in kind'. DCPs are Incorporated Documents within the Planning Scheme.
Functional Layout Plans (FLP's)	The plan submitted to engineering or infrastructure that shows the layout of subdivision, streets, utility requirements, vehicle requirements and retained trees.
Ghost Permit	A ghost permit is a non-statutory process for assessment of permit applications, prior to formal approval and gazettal of a PSP. They are generally only accepted when the detail of a PSP is well-resolved. Ghost permit processes a run at the discretion of the council.
Growth Area Teams	The growth area departments within Council, such as Planning or Engineering, who focus on applications within PSP's.
Infrastructure Contribution Plan (ICP)	ICPs are very similar to DCPs, but adopt a slightly different methodology and operate under different sections of the Planning and Environment Act. In all new PSP areas, ICPs are used instead of DCPs.
Landscape Plan	A plan that sets out the existing vegetation of the site, vegetation that is to be retained and the proposed future landscaping. They often require an arborist report and are approved by a Council planner.
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	A nonbinding agreement between two or more parties outlining the terms of an understanding. MOU's have been used in growth areas between developers and councils to confirm expectations regarding assessment timeframes and other matters. These MOU's have generally been prepared on a 'user pays' basis, whereby developers contribute funds to secure additional council resources.
PAT Process	An internal Permit Assessment Team process (used by Whittlesea Council). Here a mixed team of Council officers have a meeting to discuss an application with comments written by a lead planner.
Planning Permit	A legal document that allows a certain use and / or development of land. It normally contains written conditions that must be met and a set of plans.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Planning Permit Activity Reporting System (PPARS)	An online system that supports the monthly automated collection of standardised permit data for 80 Victorian responsible authorities. This allows for monitoring and comparison across the state.
Planning and Environment Act 1987	Establishes a legal framework for planning the use, development and protection of land in Victoria.
Precinct Structure Plan (PSP)	The blueprint for how development and investment will occur in new growth areas. PSPs show a plan for how infrastructure and investment should occur, and also specific objectives, requirements and guidelines for development. PSPs are Incorporated Documents within the Planning Scheme (they have the status of a planning scheme).
Pre-Application Meetings	The initial meeting held between the developer/proponent and council to discuss the merits of potential applications.
Preliminary Review	The first review of an application once it reaches council. Applications are typically allocated to a planning officer at this stage.
Request for Further Information (RFI)	Correspondence sent from a council officer to the applicant asking for more information related to a specific part of an application. In general, RFIs include a formal list of information required to enable a complete assessment of the application, as well as a list of preliminary matters for the applicant to consider.
Section 173 Agreements	The responsible authority can negotiate an agreement with an owner of land to set out conditions or restrictions on the use or development of the land, or to achieve other planning objectives in relation to the land.
Statement of Compliance (SOC)	Used to enable councils to ensure there is compliance with any agreements and conditions placed on a permit.
Subdivision Act 1988	Provides the legal framework for the subdivision and consolidation of land, easements and restrictions, and creation of owners' corporations.
Surveying and Planning through Electronic Applications and Referrals (SPEAR)	Software that allows planning and subdivision applications to be compiled, lodged, managed, referred, approved and tracked online.
Urban Growth Zone (UGZ)	The Urban Growth Zone applies to land within the Urban Growth Boundary designated for future urban development. It seeks to manage this transition by requiring that a PSP be created and followed within all UGZ land.
Victorian Planning Authority (VPA)	The state government body charged with providing statutory and strategic direction for the planning and delivery of a developing Victoria
Works in Kind (WIK)	An agreement between a party liable to pay DCPs/ICPs, and the responsible authority. Under it, the party agrees to undertake works in kind rather than pay a cash payment to meet their obligations.

PART 1.

Project Context

PURPOSE + APPROACH

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PART 1.

Overview

The Council Health Check is a project undertaken by the seven Melbourne metropolitan growth area councils in partnership with the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA), as part of its Streamlining for Growth program.

In recent years, the State government has unlocked substantial areas of Melbourne's growth areas for development, via the Precinct Structure Planning (PSP) process. However, despite land being zoned for development there remain significant delays in development processing. While these delays have a number of causes, this project has been designed to specifically target capacity constraints and delays associated with the growth area planning permit assessment process.

Planning permits for subdivision are a key step that enables land that has been strategically planned for growth (via a PSP) to be delivered by developers. The planning permit assessment process is managed by the municipal Council, and requires the involvement of various internal Council departments, as well as a range of external service authorities and government agencies (Statement of Compliance).

Assessment of planning permits for subdivision in growth areas are becoming increasingly more complex.

Mesh has been engaged to undertake a capability and capacity assessment of the seven councils in relation to growth area planning permit approvals processes, including pre-application processes through to planning, engineering and subdivision approvals.

Using the information gathered during the assessment, Mesh has developed a series of benchmarks to identify key opportunities for process and service improvements.

Based on an assessment of the comparative strengths and weaknesses each Council in relation to the benchmarks, an action plan has been prepared identifying prioritised opportunities for process improvement and streamlining of approvals.

Purpose of the Health Check

The overall objective of this project is to identify opportunities to improve the planning permit assessment process within Melbourne's metropolitan growth areas. Ultimately, the project seeks ways for Council to make good decisions; faster.

Ultimately, the project seeks ways for Council to make good decisions; faster.

As such, the purpose of this Health Check is to:

+ Review the process of assessment of planning permit applications for subdivision in Melbourne's metropolitan growth areas (from pre-application to issue of statement of compliance)
+ Collect quantitative and qualitative data that influences application assessment timeframes
+ Establish a set of meaningful benchmarks by which to review council performance
+ Assess the capability, capacity and performance of each growth area council against the benchmarks
+ Develop an action plan for each Council targeted at key areas of improvement revealed by the benchmarking analysis.

In addition, the Health Check project also sought to provide a platform for the seven councils to share information, experiences and learnings from their own endeavours, to provide inspiration for future improvements.

PART 1.

Scope

The Council Health Check is a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the Melbourne metropolitan growth area councils' capability, capacity and performance in relation to growth area planning applications – specifically, applications for multi-lot subdivisions. [1]

The seven councils are Casey, Cardinia, Hume, Melton, Mitchell, Whittlesea and Wyndham. While not included within the Health Check, it is intended that other Victorian Councils may benefit from the learnings and recommendations contained within this report.

The scope of the study reviews the application process from pre-application phases, through to issue of a statement of compliance.

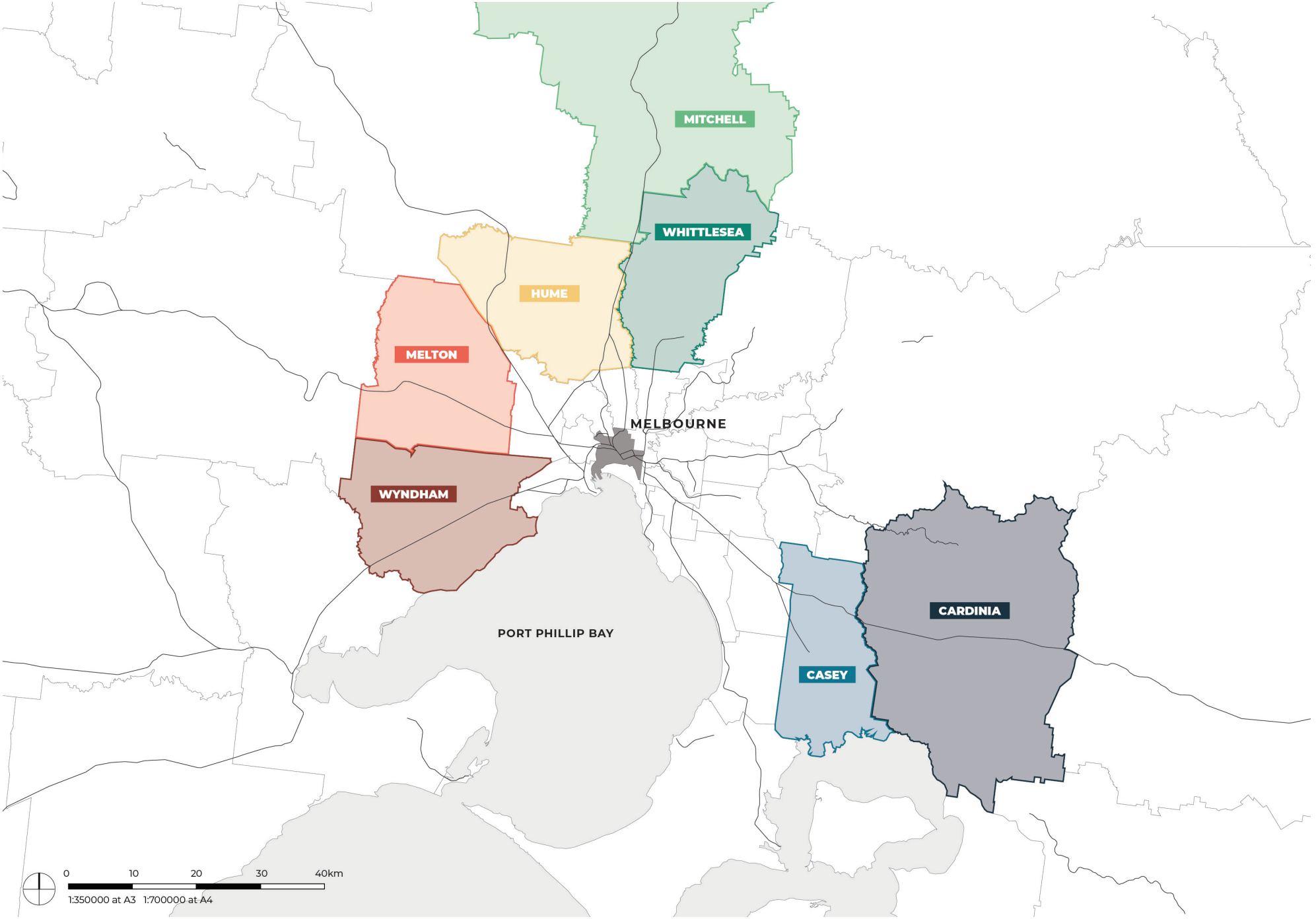
The permit approval process is complex, and as such, it has been necessary to narrow the scope of the study as follows:

+ **External referral processes** are a key step within the assessment process. Mesh has included data regarding referral timeframes and processes from Council's perspective, however, the study does not include an assessment of the referral body's processes.
+ **Development contributions** negotiations are often an important part of the permit assessment. The contributions process is currently changing at a State government level, which will have implications for Councils. The likely impacts of these changes have not been included within the scope of the study.
+ **The Planning and Environment Act, the Planning Scheme and Precinct Structure Plans** all shape and influence planning permit assessments. While the review considers where there may be key issues that impact on assessment timeframes, the Health Check does not make recommendations regarding legislative or policy changes.
+ **Dwelling approvals** As growth areas have matured, housing diversity has increased. This has meant that more dwellings are requiring approval (either through permits, or application of the Small Lot Housing Code). This study does not include an assessment of these processes.

In addition, it is important to recognise that the Health Check is not intended to be a change management program. However, it is noted that certain recommendations and actions within the Health Check Action Plans may be suitable for implementation under an existing or proposed organisational change management program.

1 The scope of the study was limited to Planning Permit applications for multi-lot subdivision of 10 or more lots, within Melbourne's declared metropolitan growth areas. Throughout this report, where we have referred to planning permit applications, we are only referring to multi-lot residential subdivision of 10 or more lots within the declared growth areas. The study data also included applications within Mitchell Shire, within areas not subject to PSPs.

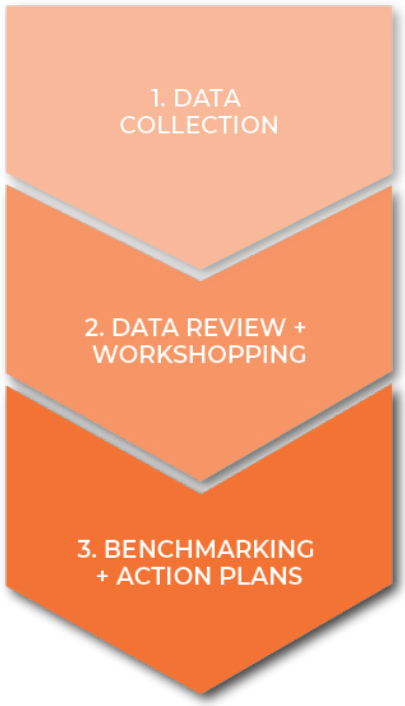
Figure 1 Melbourne's Metropolitan Growth Area Councils



Methodology

The methodology for the Health Check was developed in consultation with the seven Councils and VPA. The key objective was to ensure that meaningful data was obtained to enable benchmarking of.

A three step approach was developed:



Reflecting to the breadth of topics and issues within the Growth Area Council planning processes, deliberately varied data collection methods were employed in this project. When collecting information for this project we believed that it was important to use a variety of sources, perspectives and data, such as gathering both qualitative and quantitative insights, to be able to give the most nuanced narrative of what is currently occurring. Attempting to clarify the current situation allows us to perform our best analysis. The importance of this is that we believe this drives the creation of the most informed, and subsequently most useful, set of action plans.

The methods of data collection, a simple justification and their main limitation are discussed below:

- **Workshops** were used throughout this project. There were two at the VPA offices and one at each council. These were used to gather preliminary information, particularly around processes and culture, clarify interpretations of questions, capture new insights and share progress. A limitation of this form of collection was that at times, some members were not entirely comfortable sharing their experience on internal culture.
- **A Mesh led questionnaire and interview** were used as the grounding for this project. Data was collected through both the responses to the questions and the commentary that was occurring during this process. The topics covered revolved around council culture, communication, processes, resources, scale and maturity. A limitation of this method was that the interpretations of some questions were not always the same across different councils.
- **PPARS and SPEAR** data was collected through the VPA. As qualitative data this information showed us individual Council timeframes for their processes from certification to Statement of Compliance (SOC) and informed our understanding of processes, scale and maturity. A limitation of this source was the inputs in the program were not always reliable or reflective of councils timeframes (SPEAR data in particular is often distorted by developer timeframes).
- **A survey of the development industry** was distributed and received approximately 70 responses from relevant organisations. This survey gave an insight into how each council was performing from the perspective of the client which informed our understanding of processes, scale and resourcing. A limitation of this data source was the variability in response rate for maturing versus mature councils.
- **A desktop study** was performed for each Council reviewing their available and relevant policies, previous reviews and documents. This informed our understanding of the scale, maturity, process and resources of each Council. A limitation was that not all information was up-to-date, and a consistent level of information was not supplied across all councils.
- **Follow up questions and queries were emailed** to Council in our attempts to address any gaps in the data, clarify our understanding of their responses or ensure that the questions were interpreted correctly. A limitation was that some questions still were unanswered, however generally this was a positive iterative process.

Methodology

2. DATA REVIEW + WORKSHOPPING

Given the variety of data we have collected, an important step has been to synthesize our understanding across the different sources and ensure that we are forming a rounded view of what is occurring in the Growth Area planning space.

As mentioned, four workshops were held throughout the project with Council to both test and refine our understanding:

› **Workshop one** was held at the VPA offices with attendees from each Council from their Growth Area planning and subdivisions teams. This workshop was largely about clarifying the parameters and expectations of the project, agreeing on what type of data would be meaningful to measure, as well as mapping out the specific approaches undertaken by each council in regard to growth area permit assessment.

› At **workshop two** Mesh went to the individual council offices and collected responses to the questionnaire, as well as having a broader discussion on their current planning experiences. The results of this questionnaire has formed the basis for much of this project (refer to Appendix 1).

› At **workshop three** we returned to the individual council offices and presented our findings. This allowed council to see their responses in relation to the other councils, which often highlighted instances where questions were interpreted differently and points that needed to be clarified and updated. At this workshop, we explored with council potential actions that could improve their approaches.

› **Workshop four** was held at the VPA offices with representatives from each council, and attendance from both the growth area planning and subdivision teams. Here we workshopped the action plans and refined our recommendations.

3. BENCHMARKING + ACTION PLANS

Once we had the data and an understanding of how each Council was operating, we developed four criteria to benchmark each Council on based on the emerging themes.

These are:

+ Scale & Maturity
+ Communication & Culture
+ Process
+ Resources

These are not intended to be a judgement call on who is simply 'better', but rather they attempt to be reasoned and reflective of each Councils' unique strengths and weaknesses.

Once we had this, it became possible to write individual action plans that respond to these strengths and weaknesses.

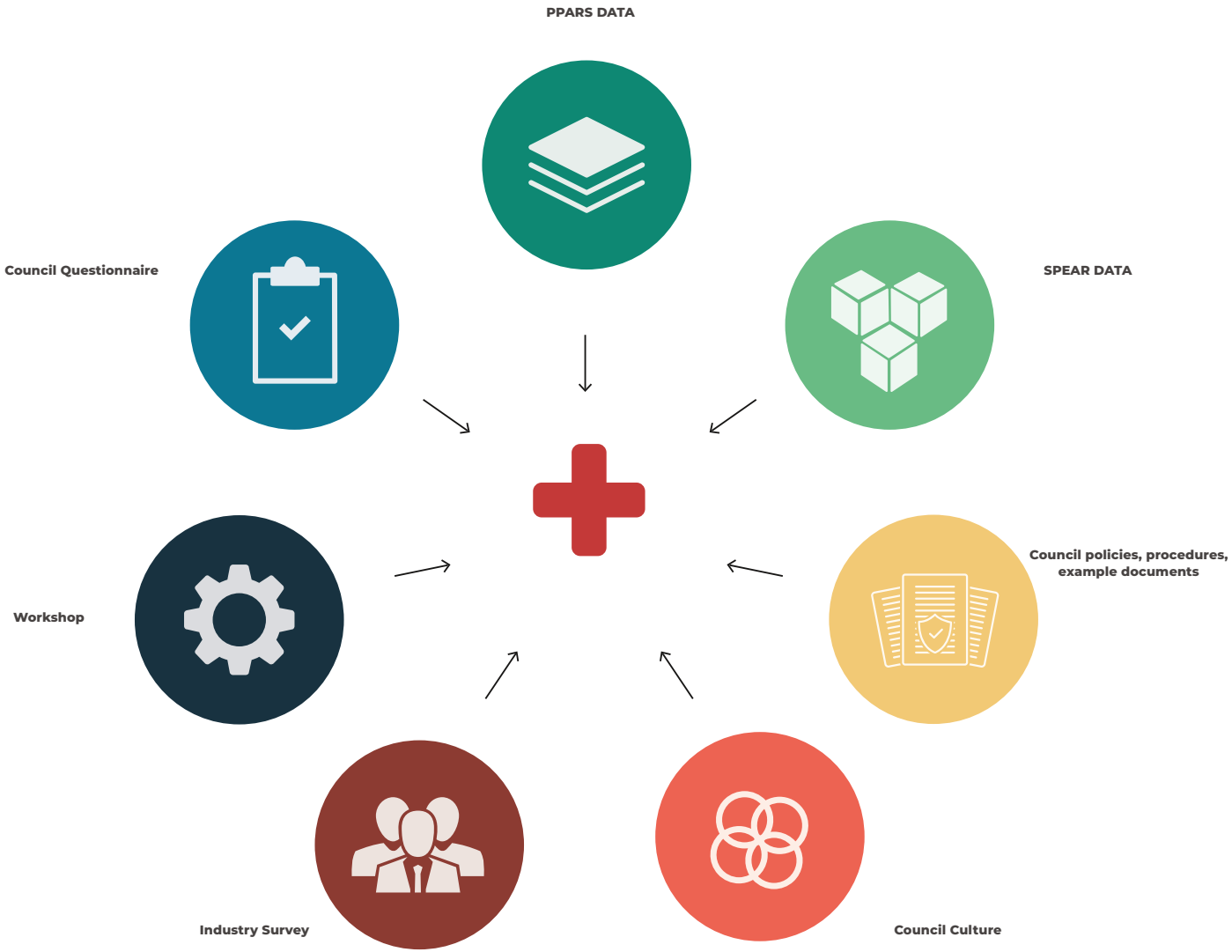


Figure 2 Health Check Data sources

PART 1.

Project Context

GROWTH AREA PLANNING CONTEXT

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Growth Area Planning

Growth area planning is unique from most other planning permit assessment processes. Growth area planning processes primarily involve permit applications for multi-lot residential subdivisions.

Subdivision development requires the developer to deliver a range of public assets (roads, essential services, open space, drainage infrastructure etc) in order for them to create their product (saleable lots). This is unlike most other development controlled by permit applications (say, a multi-unit housing development), where the developer is generally only responsible for delivering a private asset (the dwellings and common property).

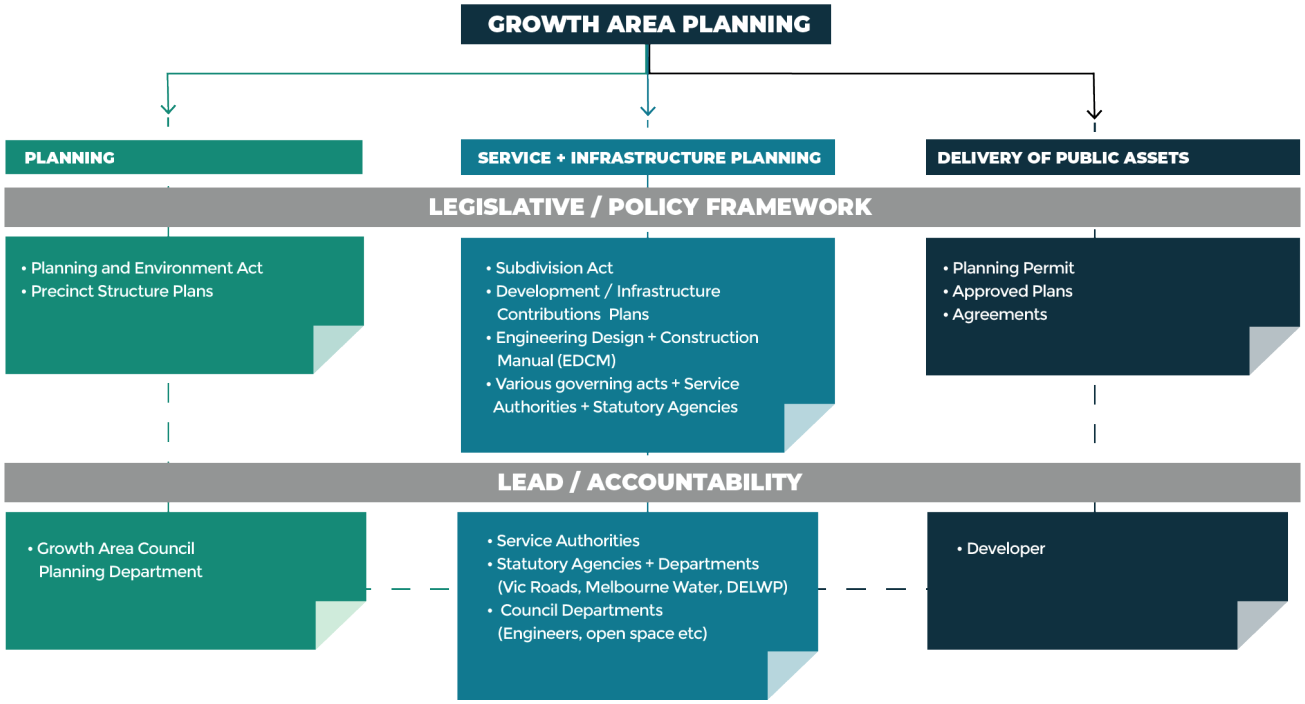

Figure 3 Growth Area Planning in Melbourne

Growth Area Planning

While this may be stating the obvious, it is worth acknowledging that this key difference, delivery of public assets by a private developer, creates an environment for a vast amount of complexity:

+ Procedurally, permit applications for subdivision are legislated by an interplay of the *Planning and Environment Act* and *Act*. Other legislation may also interface with depending on the circumstances, including the *Heritage Act, Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act, Land Acquisition and Compensation Act* and the governing Acts of the various agencies involved in service and infrastructure delivery (among others).
+ A large number of interests need to be considered and accommodated with, including those of internal Council departments and external service authorities and government agencies. Collectively these interests seek to represent those of the existing and future communities of the area to be developed and Victoria more broadly.

A large number of interests need to be considered and accommodated with, including those of internal Council departments and external service authorities and government agencies.

+ Developers, like any other commercial company, are ultimately selling a product (the individual lots). However, the value of and commercial return on the lots is greatly influenced by the form and quality of the public assets delivered by the developers (for example, the streetscapes, open spaces). This creates an inherent tension between developers who wish to maximise their return on investment (balancing infrastructure costs with amenity outcomes), and authorities, who are considering a broad range of longer term matters (future liveability, community safety, ongoing maintenance obligations etc).

Within the growth area planning process, various players have different roles:

+ **VPA**
  The State Government authority on strategic growth planning and coordinating infrastructure for emerging communities.
+ **Council planners**
  The Council officer responsible for managing development applications through the planning process.
+ **Council engineers**
  The Council employee responsible for reviewing and assessing construction design. The role generally involves approving Functional Layout Plans and Engineering Plans.
+ **Council subdivision officers**
  The Council employee responsible for signing off on Plans of Subdivision and Certification.
+ **Council departments – others**
  These departments provide specialised advice on applications, including open space, environmental issues, community requirements, urban design, waste managing etc. These departments are usually involved through the internal referral process.

Within the growth area planning process, various players have different roles.

+ **Service agencies**
  External agencies that provide advice regarding delivery of services to new communities, including power, water, sewer, gas etc.
+ **Government agencies**
  Responsible for providing specialised advice in relation to government functions. Agencies include VicRoads, Melbourne Water, DELWP etc.
+ **Developers**
  The private sector responsible for building new communities.

Planning Permit Process

The planning permit process for subdivision in growth areas generally follows a similar path across all seven growth areas, incorporating three key phases, with sub-steps:

› Pre-application

› Planning Permit Assessment

› Plan approvals and compliance

While each Council generally follows the same key phases and steps, each Council adopts slightly different procedures and methodologies. What is consistent across each council is that growth area planning permits require extensive 'project management' to ensure the application moves efficiently through the process. For the most part, the planner is tasked with this project management role.[2]

Detailed journey maps (refer to Appendix 2) have been prepared for each council, identifying the standard policies and procedures adopted by the council, the lead agent for each step (Council or the applicant), and the method for communicating information (i.e. via email, through meetings, written correspondence etc).

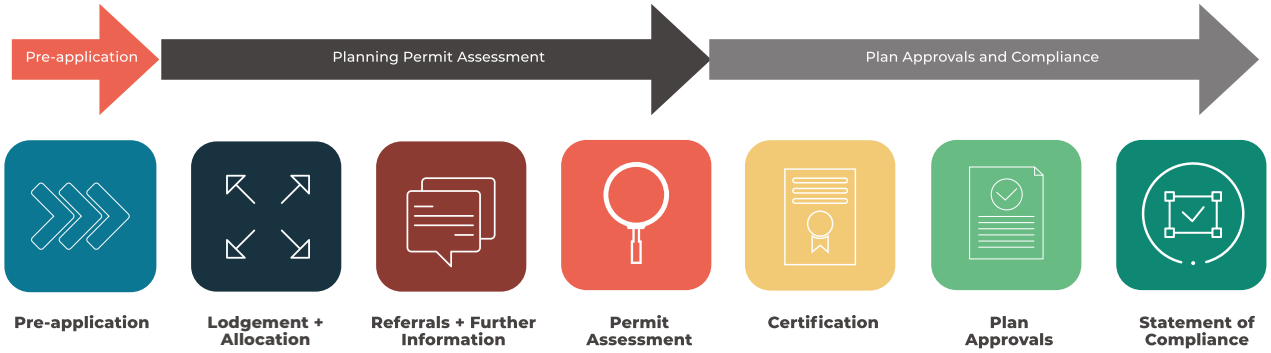

Figure 4 Growth Area Planning Permit Process for Multi-lot subdivisions

2 At least until permit approval. During the plan approvals phase, project management often becomes more diffuse, with engineers taking the lead for most engineering/construction related matters.

Planning Permit Process

Pre-application

This is an optional meeting between the developer and council to discuss the merits of a future application. Most councils felt that it was valuable to hold a pre-app meeting, whilst some developers felt that they did not gain enough meaningful feedback from these meetings to enhance the certainty of their applications.

Lodgement and allocation

Lodgement is where a permit application arrives within Council (either electronically or hard copy – depending on the council). Management then allocate the application to a planner. There were some delays felt in this stage over the time taken to internally upload applications and allocate to the planner.

Referrals and Further information

This stage is where the planner asks for comments on an application from other relevant departments. Receiving responses to this had significant potential for delays. Further information are sent to applicants when additional material, or greater detail and clarity on parts of an application is required. This stage of the process is where the greatest delays are felt – primarily associated with circular referrals once developers respond to feedback.

Permit assessment

This stage requires the planner to consider the application in light of relevant policies and referral comments and write a delegate report stating whether they believe a permit should be granted or denied. There are opportunities for tightening this process to make it more targeted, meaningful, and swifter.

Certification

In the certification stage, Councils' ensure that subdivision applications comply with the Subdivision Act and its technical components. The timeframes for this phase are difficult to measure, as many applicants upload Plans of Subdivision for certification prematurely, which skews the data. Key delays occur when there is uncertainty about sign off accountability.

Plan approvals

This stage involves assessment and approval of FLP's, engineering plans and landscape plans. Delays in this stage occur when resubmissions are required due to poor quality of information, or when there is disagreement about design proposals.

Statement of compliance

Used to ensure that there is compliance with any of the agreements or conditions placed on a permit. SOC is generally swift once service authorities have provided consent. However, SPEAR data provides an incomplete gauge of timeframes as there are numerous matters to be completed during this phase that are not solely the responsibility of council.

Planning Permit Process

A key pain point between councils and developers relates to certainty, and the level of detail required to make decisions. Developer's estates are often delivered over a number of years, during which time market conditions and preferences can change quite substantially.

Developers will always change their developments (layout, staging, lot sizes, marketing approach) to respond to these changes in the market. As such, while councils seek to lock down as much detail as possible up front, developers will often seek to defer this detail to later stages in the process, acknowledging that it may change several times along the way.

A key pain point between councils and developers relates to certainty, and the level of detail required to make decisions.

General Observations

+ Council's role as the representative of the long term community interest is taken very seriously by all councils.
+ The complexity to be addressed by the permit process by nature results in conflicting objectives and advice from different bodies within the assessment process.
+ Various efforts have been made in recent years to improve clarity and certainty through the process through standardised requirements.
+ There is a tendency to see the process as a means of building consensus across all parties (internal council departments and external authorities and agencies), which narrows the ability to challenge standards or explore alternative approaches.
+ The technical nature of infrastructure delivery and construction, as well as the many issues encountered during the assessment, elevates the weight given by planners to advice from internal and external referrals bodies.
+ Organisational culture, the varying power relationships between internal departments and attitude towards growth area can greatly influence timeframes and approaches to assessment.
+ Councils are experimenting with alternative approaches to improving their service, including 'user pays' approaches. Not all councils are comfortable philosophically with this type of approach.

Council's role as the representative of the long term community interest is taken very seriously by all councils.

PART 2.

Analysis + Findings

ANALYSIS + FINDINGS

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Benchmarks

A key objective of the Council Health Check is to develop meaningful benchmarks for capability, capacity and performance that can be used to identify relative strengths and weakness, and provide a basis for targeted recommendations and actions.

Eight benchmarks have been developed for this project, which target four key areas recognising:

The qualitative and quantitative data collected during the Health Check has been used to inform Mesh's assessment of each council against the eight benchmarks.

SCALE + MATURITY

Each council is different in terms of its experience planning for growth

COMMUNICATION + CULTURE

Organisational culture significantly influences capability and performance

PROCESS

There are different ways of doing things that we can learn from, and

RESOURCES

Investment in people and technology presents opportunities for improvement

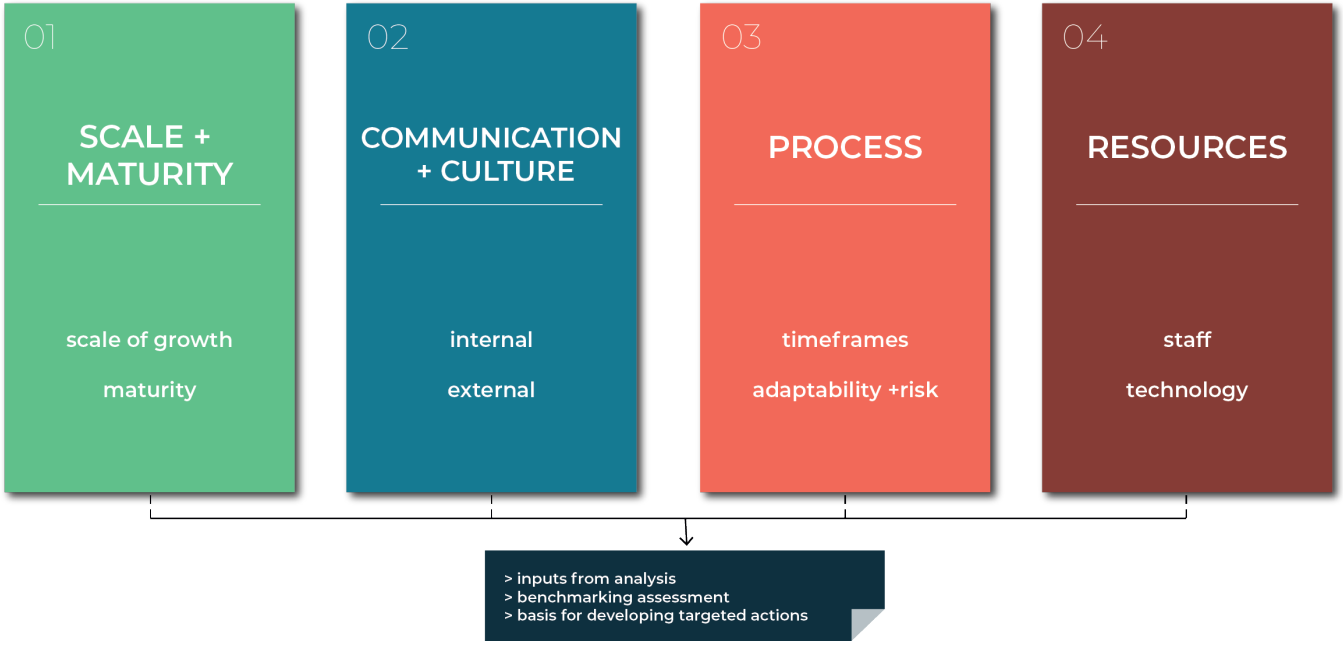


Figure 5 Council Health Check benchmarks

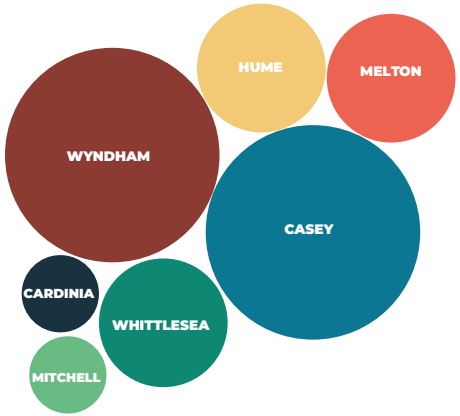
Strengths, Weaknesses + Opportunities

01

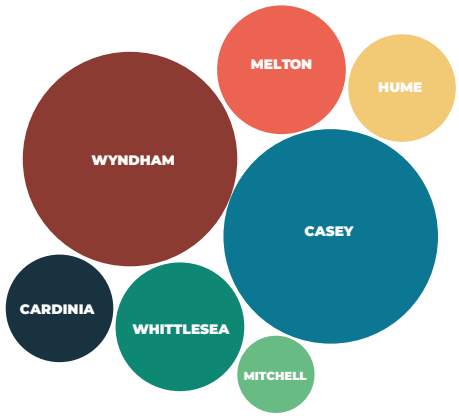
SCALE + MATURITY

02

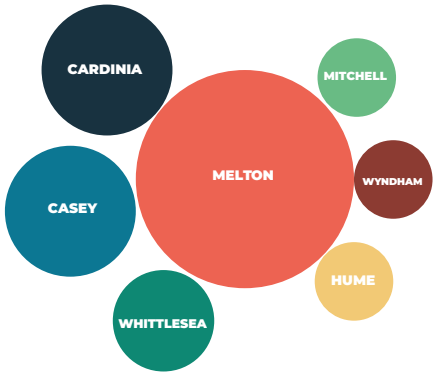
COMMUNICATION + CULTURE



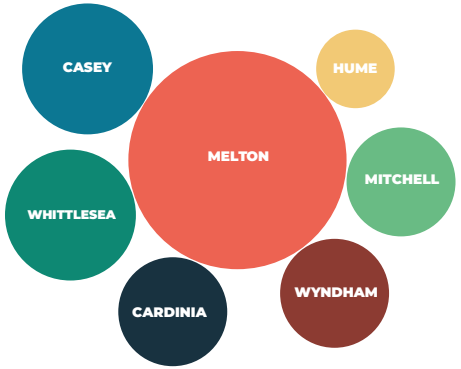
SCALE OF GROWTH



MATURITY



INTERNAL



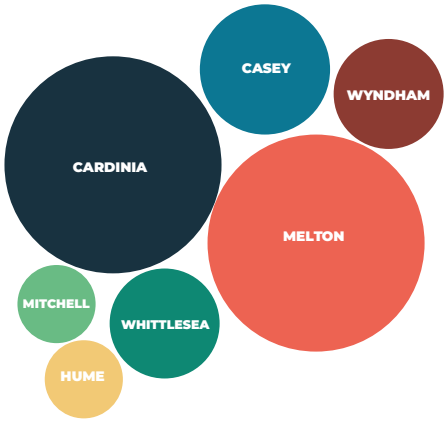
EXTERNAL

03

PROCESS

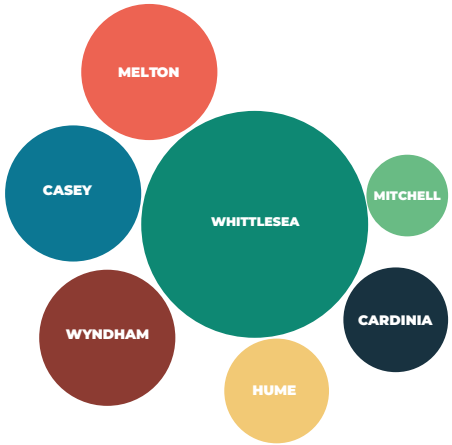
04

RESOURCES

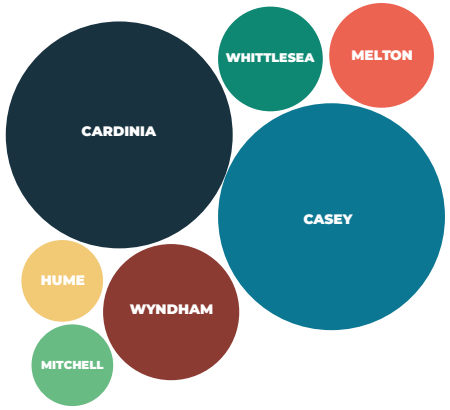


TIMEFRAMES

ADAPTABILITY + RISK



STAFF



TECHNOLOGY

Figure 6 Strengths and weaknesses

Strengths, Weaknesses + Opportunities

CASEY

- A strength of Casey is their maturity and the scale of growth that they have experienced. They are a well-established council with a strong understanding of growth area planning that has evolved in part from the length of time they have worked in this space, as well as with the range of developers they have worked with. Through this they have developed strong relationships, both internally and externally, and refined many of their processes. They are a well-resourced council with skilled staff and progressive technological assets.
- An area for improvement within Casey is in the adaptability of some of their internal processes. As a Council with long-standing experience, it is natural that Casey should have developed an aversion to risk. It is possible however that some of their internal processes may have been refined to a point where it is difficult for innovation to be realised.

CARDINIA

- The strengths of Cardinia are in their process timeframes and technological resources, and in particular the alignment that they have achieved between the two.
- Cardinia appears to be braced for an increase in the amount of development applications they will face. It is a positive of the organisation that their current processes and technology appear to be functioning well. An opportunity for improvement however is with staff resourcing - this will likely need to scale up (number and skills to respond to increasing growth. Opportunities to develop more strategic DCP/ICP management tools would also be a benefit.

HUME

- Hume is a mature and stable team, that has developed strong strategic and DCP processes for proactively building a council position in relation to growth and infrastructure delivery.
- New PSP areas recently approved, and that are about to be approved, will open the door to greater volumes of growth and diversity of developers. In this context, Hume would benefit from re-examining their internal processes and relationships, technological infrastructure and resource allocation to facilitate improved processing times, communication and collaboration.

MELTON

- A strength of Melton is the alignment that they have achieved between their internal processes and culture. It appears that there is a strong understanding throughout Melton of their teams, values, processes and role within the planning and development landscape. This has allowed for generally empowered decision making and to ensure that new communities are delivered with timely provision of community infrastructure.
- A potential disruption to this may occur as Melton continue to mature and face increased volumes of growth. Opportunities exist to reinforce their collaborative and facilitative approach under the new leadership recently appointed, and to invest in technological resources.

MITCHELL

› A strength of Mitchell is the current levels of adaptability and innovation that they have within assessment processes. Whilst their response to growth has previously been dealt with on a case-by-case basis, Mitchell are investing in their staff resources to take a more holistic approach to growth area planning.

› As Mitchell face vastly accelerated volumes of growth, we recommend that Council learn from more experienced councils, adapt their approaches, and build their front-line planning resources.

WHITTLESEA

› A strength of Whittlesea is that they are a well-resourced and mature team, with a historic legacy as leaders in growth area planning. The combination of these two components has, in part, allowed Whittlesea to develop a positive relationship with the wider development industry.

› Despite having a well-resourced workforce, Whittlesea's limitations are their technological resources. In addition, there is scope to review internal processes to improve timeframes.

WYNDHAM

› A strength of Wyndham is that they are a well-established council within growth area planning. This has allowed council to be comparatively well-resourced in terms of the number of staff in their growth area departments, and the technology resources that they have available. Wyndham have managed to combine these different facets with some defined processes to produce results within reasonable timeframes – particularly for MOU signatories.

› A potential point of difficulty for Wyndham is with the conservative levels of adaptability and risk that they have built into their processes. Wyndham's assessment processes are dominated somewhat by the engineering team, and there is opportunity to re-examine internal processes to recalibrate this power balance.

PART 2.

01

SCALE + MATURITY

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Maturity	34

PART 2.

Introduction

The scale and maturity benchmarks recognise that is different in terms of its experience as a growth area. This different experience has resulted in council's structuring themselves differently (organisationally and in terms of processes) to respond to metropolitan-scale greenfield growth.

For example, councils such as Casey, Wyndham and Whittlesea have experienced extensive metropolitan-scale greenfield growth for a long-period of time (30+ years), and as such, have structured their organisation and processes to respond to this growth.

These structures have evolved over time and are now generally considered quite sophisticated. Mitchell, by contrast, has only recently become part of 'metropolitan Melbourne', and as such, is still developing its team and processes to respond to the greater scale and pace of development associated with.

It is important to measure this benchmark as it will be necessary to target recommendations and actions that have regard to the following:

SCALE OF GROWTH
What volume/pace council is currently experiencing and likely to experience in the future.

MATURITY
How developed and sophisticated are council's existing approaches to growth area planning.

Figure 7 Scale of Growth – Active and Pending Precinct Structure Plans

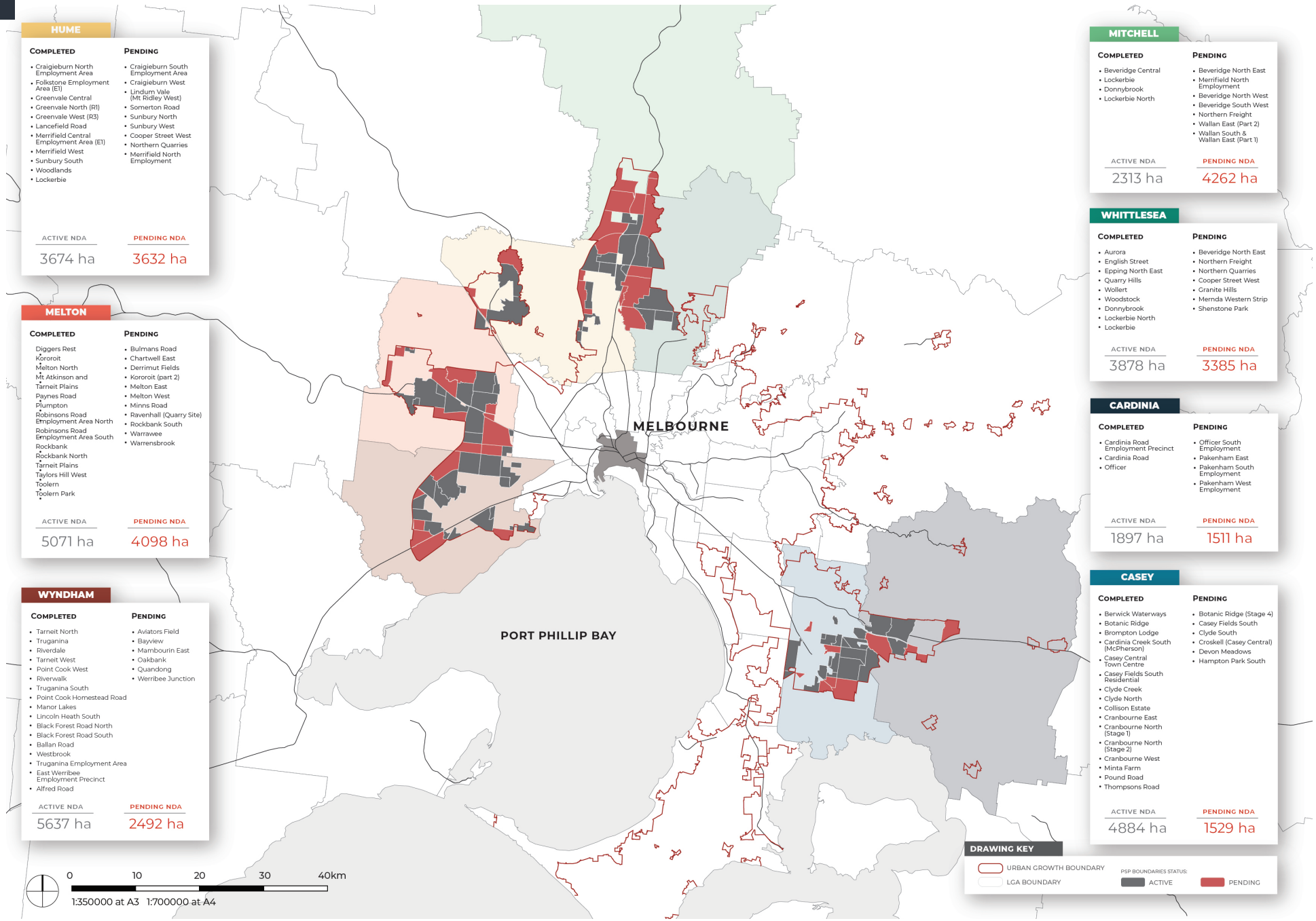
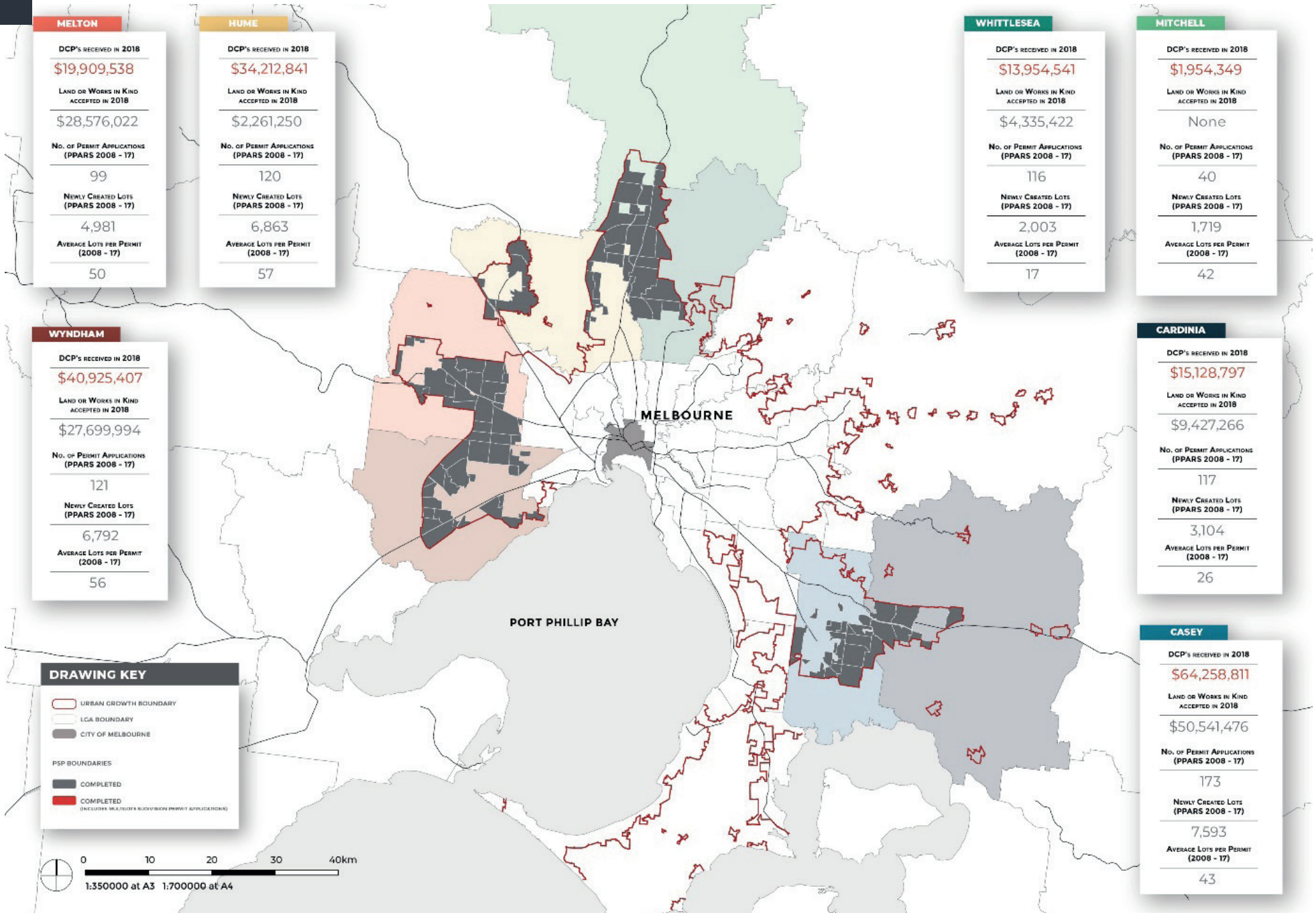


Figure 8 Maturity of Growth - Permits, lots and DCP revenue



mesh

Summary of Actions

Overall

› Shared Learning and Workshop Forum

› Growth Areas Mentoring Program

Casey

› Risk Setting Review

Cardinia

› Brokered MOU's with the Development Industry

Hume

› Cross Council Growth Area Vision Program

› Brokered MOU's with Development Industry

Melton

› Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program

Mitchell

› Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program

Whittlesea

› Cross Council Growth Area Vision Program

› Brokered MOU's with the Development Industry

Wyndham

› Cross Council Growth Area Vision Program

› Risk Setting Review

› Review of the Existing MOU Approach

Scale of Growth

The scale of growth benchmark takes into consideration data relating to number of permits issued, number of active and pending Precincts Structure Plans, developable area (active and pending), scale and diversity of developers present within the growth area and scale of DCP revenue collected.

WHITTLESEA

2nd largest area of active NDA (6500 ha) spread across 8 PSP's. High number of lots created. Dominated by large-scale developers.

HUME

Large area of active NDA across approved PSPs (14) however early growth dominated by a single developer. Team now adapting to more diversity in developers and growth fronts.

WYNDHAM

The most approved PSP's (17) covering 4200ha. Relatively high number of permits issued. Medium and large-scale developers dominate.

MITCHELL

Smallest 'active' area of NDA, with fewest no. of permits. Generally, smaller-scale, fragmented developments, however, larger scale development pending - new PSPs with consolidated landholdings.

CARDINIA

Smallest active and pending growth areas, however, has experienced high volume of permits. Generally mid-scale developers. Potential further growth in future (beyond UGB).

MELTON

Largest area of net developable area spread across 13 PSP's (8000ha). Numerous active and emerging growth fronts. A mix of medium to large-scale developments.

CASEY

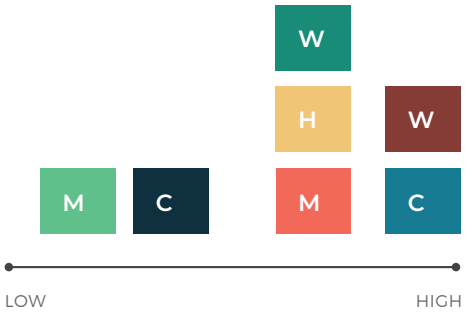
Large area of active NDA with approved PSP's (15). Highest volume of permit activity and newly created lots with greatest amount of DCP's / WIK collected. High proportion of large-scale developers.

LOWER SCALE OF GROWTH

HIGH SCALE OF GROWTH

Figure 9 Scale of Growth Benchmark

Scale of Growth



CASEY

Casey has traditionally comprised Melbourne's largest and fastest growing greenfield growth area. Historically Melbourne's market garden centre, the south-east, and Casey in particular, has generally been considered a premier growth area. As such, Casey has attracted most of the large scale multinational developers delivering masterplanned estates, as well as a range of mid-scale developers who have assembled parcels of land.

With 15 approved PSPs in place, the remaining 6 PSPs that are pending will complete the strategic planning for Casey's growth areas within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Over the past 10 years, Casey has processed the highest volume of permit applications, created the highest number of lots and collected the greatest quantity of development contributions.

Casey's growth is reaching peak volumes. However, the scale and pace of growth is likely to continue for a number of years to come (notwithstanding market conditions).

CARDINIA

Cardinia has experienced moderate growth over the past 10 years, however, this growth should be considered in the context of Cardinia's Shire status. While the western part of the municipality comprises some of Melbourne's fastest growing greenfield growth areas, the balance of the Shire is largely rural.

While Cardinia's scale of growth (volume number of lots and scale of DCP revenue) is on par with other relatively mature growth area Council's, Cardinia's developers tend to be mid-scale, local developers.

However, Cardinia currently only has three active PSPs. A number of new PSPs are set for imminent approval, which is likely to greatly expand the area under development, and possibly attract larger-scale developer interest. Cardinia, being located on the city fringe, is also experiencing extensive speculation outside the UGB, raising questions about the future scale of the Shire's growth areas.

Cardinia's scale of growth is likely to increase in the coming years, and speculation outside the UGB may place pressure on council to respond.

HUME

Hume's growth post Local Government amalgamations was initially led by a few developers who have delivered large masterplanned communities predominantly within the Craigieburn growth area, and to a smaller extent within the Sunbury area, over a long period of time. Local structure planning, masterplans, development plans and bespoke zones were initially used to facilitate growth and control the release of land.

More recently, within the last 10 years, with approval of more PSP's and substantial expansion of the growth capacity of Sunbury, a greater variety of developers, including small to mid-scale developers, have commenced operations within the municipality. As such, Hume's scale of growth is on par with Wyndham, in terms of volume of permits, number of lots created and DCPs collected.

There are a large number of greenfield developers currently active in Hume. Fragmented ownership of some of Hume's PSP areas, combined with the high costs for utility and road infrastructure, has impacted the orderly delivery and rate of development within some PSP's. Hume has a number of new PSP's either pending approval or pending ICP approval, which will substantially increase the scale and of growth and diversity of developers in the municipality.

MELTON

Melton had moderate growth prior to the PSP process with historical growth area planning generally focussed towards the south-eastern corridor and to some extent the northern corridor. Caroline Springs was Melton's legacy pre PSP development and prior to the vision of Melbourne 2030, it was never anticipated that the extensive landholdings between Melton and Caroline Springs would one day form a substantial growth corridor in the west.

Melton was one of the first Councils to have a PSP gazetted in 2010 and have been subject to continued growth over the last 10 years. With 13 PSPs in place (5 of which are more recent approvals with gazettal's in 2017 & 2018) this has substantially increased developable land in the municipality. The number of approved PSPs, with another 12 PSPs pending, will complete the strategic planning for Melton's growth areas within the Urban Growth Boundary.

Due to the number of PSPs, Melton has numerous active and emerging growth fronts. Melton has attracted a range of developers with mid-scale to large developers dominating the growth areas.

Melton's growth is anticipated to continue for a number of years to come (notwithstanding market conditions).

MITCHELL

Mitchell has traditionally experienced only modest scale growth in and around Wallan township. However, following the inclusion of Beveridge into the UGB, Mitchell is set to experience extensive metropolitan-scale growth in the future (a number of PSPs are pending).

This will substantially change the landscape for Mitchell in terms of scale, pace and type of growth. In particular, Mitchell will move from a Council dealing with small-scale, fragmented growth, to dealing with large consolidated parcels of land held by large-scale developers/land holders.

Mitchell's growth is likely to substantially expand in scale, pace and type as new PSP areas are released.

WHITTLESEA

Whittlesea has a long association with growth area development and have led the way for growth in Melbourne's northern growth corridor, however much of this growth was pre PSPs, and implemented under Development Plans. As such, Whittlesea has attracted most of the large scale multinational developers delivering masterplanned estates, as well as a range of mid-scale developers who have assembled parcels of land.

With 8 approved PSPs in place, and another 7 PSPs pending, this will complete the strategic planning for Whittlesea's growth areas within the UGB. Surprisingly, over the past 10 years, Whittlesea is at the lower end of the growth area Councils in regard to the amount of development contributions and lots created, while still issuing a similar amount of permits to most other Councils.

Whittlesea's scale and pace of growth is likely to continue at a steady pace for a number of years to come (notwithstanding market conditions).

WYNDHAM

Similar to Melton, Wyndham had moderate growth prior to the PSP process with historical growth area planning focussed towards the south-eastern corridor and to some extent the northern corridor.

Wyndham has the most approved PSPs with 17 in place, and another 6 PSPs pending to complete the strategic planning for Wyndham's growth areas within the UGB. Due to the number of PSPs, Wyndham has numerous active and emerging growth fronts. Wyndham has attracted a range of developers with mid-scale to large developers dominating the growth areas.

Over the past 10 years, Wyndham sits behind Casey as a leader in growth area development, and has lead Melbourne's western growth corridor in regard to collection of development contributions, lots created and number of permits issued.

Wyndham's scale and pace of growth is likely to continue for a number of years to come (notwithstanding market conditions).

Maturity

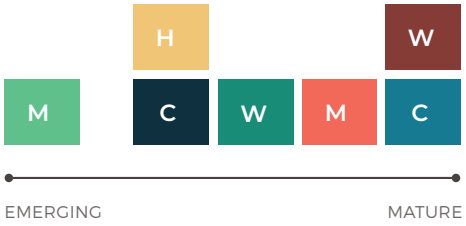
The maturity benchmark takes into consideration length of time as a growth area council, the council's historical context dealing with growth and their sophistication of approach to growth area planning across the organisation as a whole.

This benchmark also considers the evolution of internal processes that have occurred over time, for example, in response to service reviews and organisational change. As such, this benchmark is largely based on qualitative data sourced during the questionnaire interviews and observations during the workshops.

This benchmark is largely based on qualitative data sourced during the questionnaire interviews and observations during the workshops.

Figure 10 Maturity Benchmark

Maturity



CASEY

Prior to the establishment of the Growth Areas Authority (now the VPA), Casey has had extensive experience undertaking their own strategic planning for its growth areas, to enable holistic assessment of planning permit applications. Casey has been recognised as a leader in growth area planning, and are particularly recognised as early adopters of implementation tools such as development contributions plans.

Given the extensive experience as a growth area council, Casey has developed an organisational structure and set of sophisticated processes to efficiently and effectively respond to the volume and complexity of growth area applications. A recent organisation-wide change to a 'Lean system' has resulted in a flexible and adaptable workspace (in the newly constructed Bunjil Place) and a focus on technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness (paperless office).

Notwithstanding, Casey officers have recognised that while there have been substantial improvement and evolution of their approaches to growth area planning over the years, there has not been a commensurate improvement in innovation. This is primarily attributed to a risk averse culture.

As a mature growth area Council, recommendations and actions should be targeted more at positive enhancements to existing approaches that focus on innovation and collaboration with developers, rather than seeking to establish new approaches.

Casey's recent organisation-wide changes provides opportunities to leverage Council-wide vision setting programs to target actions.

CARDINIA

Cardinia, while a relative newcomer to growth area planning, has developed a dedicated growth area planning team and a sophisticated set of processes to assess applications. These processes are assisted by the recent organisation-wide adoption of a flexible working space (in the new Council offices) and paperless technology (integrated IT systems).

Cardinia officers have acknowledged that while they now feel more confident dealing with traditional residential development, new challenges will be presented as more employment and activity centre development comes before them. Cardinia are also seeking to develop the level of sophistication of their approach to negotiating DCPs, and establishing processes for the new ICP system.

An emerging growth area that punches above its weight in terms of level of sophistication. Actions should therefore be targeted in a way to build on these strengths, rather than recast existing approaches.

Cardinia's recent organisation-wide changes provide opportunities to leverage fresh Council vision setting programs to target actions.

New growth areas present opportunities to work more proactively with the development industry to achieve common objectives.

HUME

While considered a high growth municipality, local structure planning, masterplans, development plans and bespoke zones early in its growth phases appears to have shaped the delivery of development in Hume. More recently, through the PSP and Urban Growth Zone model, growth has escalated (in pace, number of growth fronts and diversity of developers). Hume's resourcing and processing methodologies to growth area approvals have struggled to adapt to this changing landscape, particularly where fragmented land ownership requires a coordinated developer and Council approach to viably unlock land and achieve orderly development.

Local structure plans and development plan processes within a strategic planning framework have driven implementation within a framework which Council created. Hume has committed resources to strategic planning in anticipation of and in parallel to State-led processes (such as UGB expansions and Precinct Structure Planning). For example, Hume prepared a holistic Council position in relation to growth in the form of the Hume Integrated Growth Area Plan (HIGAP). This equipped Council to participate actively and collaboratively with the VPA, developers and others in the preparation of PSP's, particularly in Sunbury and Lindum Vale. Observations. As a Council undergoing substantial change in the growth areas, it is important that there is continued organisation-wide acceptance of any changes in approach to growth area planning. Hume could benefit from reviewing internal processes, protocols and resourcing when undertaking Post PSP assessments and approvals.

MELTON

Melton, while a relative newcomer to growth area planning 10 years ago, has developed a dedicated growth area planning team and a sophisticated set of processes to assess applications. This has included a dedicated Project Manager to each permit application that manages the process from the pre application phase through to the issue of Statement of Compliance. Council has also heavily invested in a Development Contributions Framework which now needs to evolve to include Infrastructure Contribution Plans.

With Councils investment in a solid growth area planning framework, while also being open to innovative funding methods, this has allowed Council to build community infrastructure to support the growing communities. Melton is one of the few Councils that have urban designers that review subdivision applications. While this gives voice to an often overlooked aspect of the planning assessment process, balancing ideal urban design outcomes and the commercial viability of a development, it can at times be challenging. Melton is known within the development industry as having a willingness to work with developers to create developments with a point of difference and unique community benefits. Notwithstanding the above, staff turnover in recent years has created some challenges for the growth area team. With a new Coordinator and a stable team now in place this creates the opportunity to re-establish and evolve the existing growth area planning framework Council has in place.

An established growth area Council that has a solid framework in place for growth area planning. Actions should therefore be targeted in a way to build on these strengths, rather than recast existing approaches. Staff turnover has impacted on some of the existing processes Council has in place and re-establishment and evolvement of the existing growth area framework (including development contributions) is required.

MITCHELL

Mitchell's growth to date has primarily been in the form of small-scale growth on fragmented parcels, in and around Wallan, plus some mid-scale masterplanned estates (generally planned around golf courses). As such, Mitchell has not adopted a dedicated 'growth area' approach to planning and engineering approvals. Officers have recognised that planning responses have tended to be ad hoc and reactive to developers.

As new PSPs are approved, Mitchell will be faced with development on a much greater scale, and at a much faster pace, and as such, will need to transform their approaches to growth area planning. However, given there is a large amount of land consolidation within the new growth areas, there are also substantial opportunities to partner closely with developers to generate long term holistic visions for the area.

A newly emerging growth area that is well-positioned to learn from the experiences of more mature growth areas as a means of gearing up proactively for future metro-scale growth.

WHITTLESEA

Prior to establishment of the Growth Areas Authority (now the VPA), Whittlesea has had extensive experience undertaking its own developed planning for its growth areas, to enable a strategic approach to growth area planning as opposed to ad hoc growth. Whittlesea has been recognised, to some extent, as the pioneer of strategic growth area planning through the preparation of a number of Development Plans which have now been successfully implemented. As part of the extensive strategic work undertaken, Whittlesea developed a number of internal processes to assist with the implementation and coordination of growth area planning across Council, which included the development of the cross-departmental PAT process. Given the extensive experience as a growth area council, Whittlesea developed an organisational structure (although it is worth noting more recent organisation changes and that Council no longer having a Planning Directorate) and a set of sophisticated processes to efficiently and effectively respond to the volume and complexity of growth area applications. While Whittlesea have solid process in place there has not been substantial improvement and evolution of their approaches to growth area planning over the years. This has potentially impacted on the ability of Council officers to be able to make clear and timely decisions on behalf of Council.

As a mature growth area Council, recommendations and actions should be targeted more to refinement of existing approaches to growth area planning including cross departmental processes to assist in making clear concise and timely decisions, rather than seeking to establish new approaches. The recent organisation-wide structural change, with Council no longer having a specific Planning Directorate, requires Council to ensue growth area planning remains a collaborative and integrated process across Council.

WYNDHAM

Wyndham, while a relative newcomer to growth area planning 10 years ago, has experienced rapid growth and required to quickly development a growth area framework to respond to the extensive growth occurring. Unlike Casey, who had been experiencing substantial growth for a number of years pre PSPs, Wyndham had moderate growth which quickly escalated to Wyndham being one of the fastest growing growth area Councils.

In response to the growth, Council has developed a dedicated growth area planning team and a sophisticated set of processes to assess applications. This has included the innovative Memorandum of Understanding (developer pays approach) to assist with expedited timeframes in assessing permit applications.

Wyndham have undertaken extensive strategic planning in regard to infrastructure requirements and now have a strong framework in place that requires infrastructure led sequencing of development.

Notwithstanding the strong infrastructure framework Council has in place, there seems to be a growing gap in regard to infrastructure delivery, risk management and Council allowing innovative and creative development outcomes with decision making often dominated by infrastructure delivery and risk.

The MOU is considered a positive process both within Council and the development industry. Opportunities exist to explore how the MOU could be applied more broadly to assist in fostering improved innovative outcomes.

A risk adverse Council that is driven by infrastructure delivery. Opportunity to rebalance between risk and innovative development outcomes.

PART 2.

02

COMMUNICATION + CULTURE

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PART 2.

Introduction

The communication and culture benchmark compares the different ways that council officers communicate with each other, and with the development industry. The benchmark also seeks to understand the organisational culture and how this influences decision-making, internal processes and attitudes towards growth area planning.

This benchmark measures the following:

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

How and when council officers collaborate with each other, the balance of power between various internal departments, decision-making style, and who is empowered to make decisions. This benchmark also looks at whether council tends to speak with a single consistent voice, or whether there is a tendency for internal contradiction.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

How council officers interact with the development community, their level of transparency regarding decision-making, their openness to new ideas and new ways of doing things and their general responsiveness to applicants. This benchmark also considers whether councils are viewed as proactive or reactive and whether they are willing to genuinely negotiate with the development industry, or whether they prefer to strictly adhere to pre-set standards. A council's attitude towards the development industry is also gauged.

Summary of Actions

Overall

› Greenfield Development Training (Developers' Perspective)

› Growth Area Forum (Councils, VPA, Developers)

› Negotiation Training

Casey

› Internal Service Agreements

Cardinia

› Internal Service Agreements

› Local Industry Forums and Information Sessions

Hume

› Growth Area Induction Programs

› Internal Service Agreements

› Communication Protocol

› Local Industry Forums and Information Sessions

Melton

› Local Industry Forums and Information Sessions

› Internal Service Agreements

Mitchell

› Local Industry Forum and Information Session

Whittlesea

› Internal Service Agreements

Wyndham

› Cross Council Growth Area Vision Program

› Internal Service Agreement

Summary of Actions

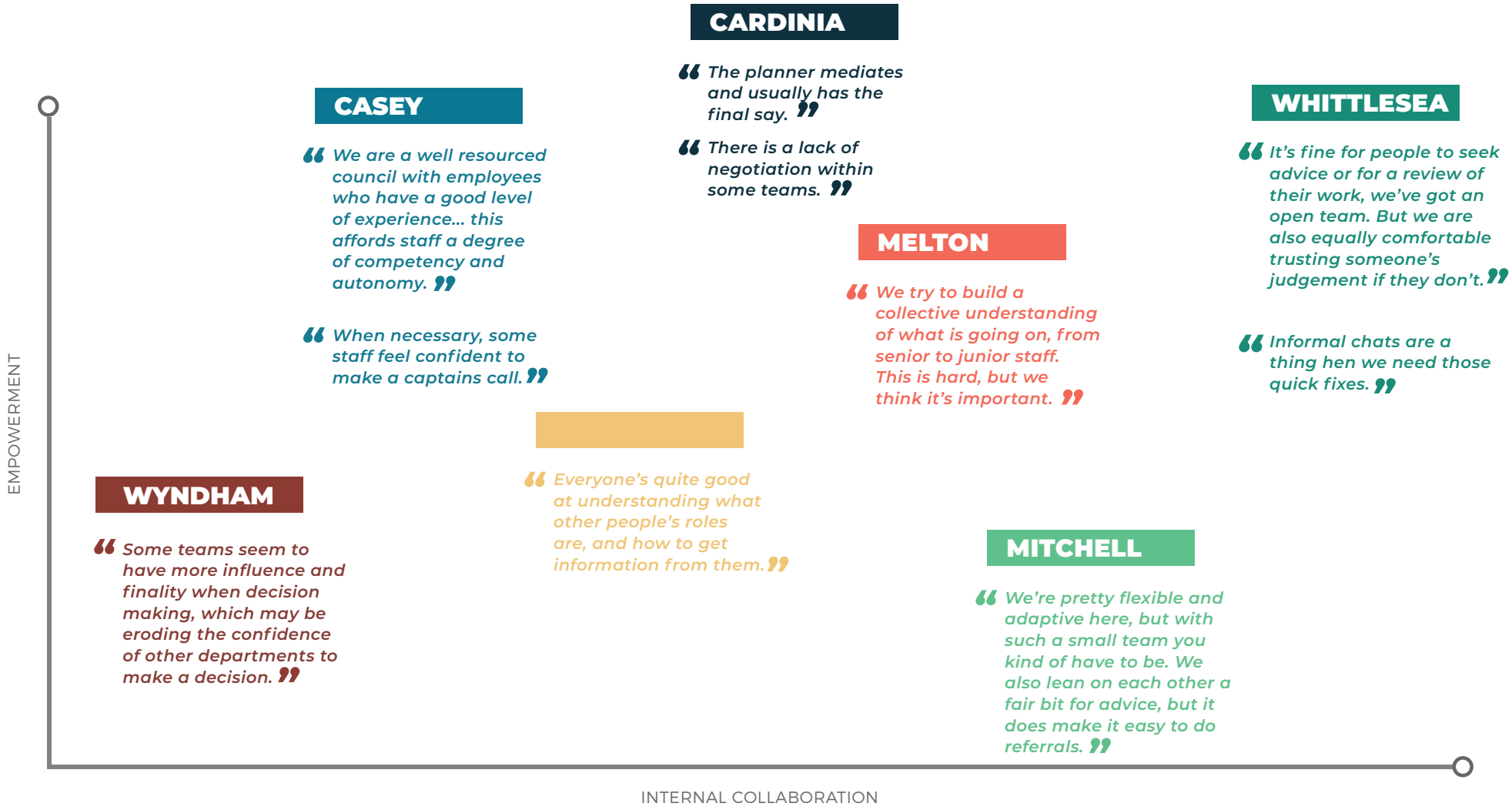

Figure 11 Empowerment and internal collaboration scale

WYNDHAM

> There is an **inflexibility** by Council officers (or perhaps a perception by Officers that they are unable to exercise flexibility) to support propositions that are not strictly in accordance with PSP or other Council Guidance.

> Pre-application feedback was generally **very negative and conservative** from an engineering base... Council Planners unwilling to negotiate with / override Council's engineers who seem to hold most power.

> RFI's... can seem motivated as a **"stalling technique"** rather than an actual wish to engage with the applicant... often for data that is **irrelevant or not required** for the application.

> **Bottleneck** at engineering.

CASEY

> In our initial communications they seemed to be quite **rigid to their policies** and conservatve in their views. As we progressed however, this stance softened.

> The team an Council are **willing to take calls... to discuss** further information requests.

> A **pragmatic and proactive approach** has been taken by the planning team, which at times required resolution of **inconsistencies between Coul departments.**

MELTON

> Stock standard. A lot of copy and paste in RFI letters. **Where conflicts arose it was unclear how to proceed.**

> **Welcome change from the adversarial approach** experienced in other municipalities.

> **Difficulty accessing internal department** officers to deal with comments direct.

> **...responsive** as they could be.

CARDINIA

> Sometimes we have been given **contradictory information** that has cost us time.

> **Generally a responsive Council** however we did notice that recent changes in staffing have reduced the ownership and clarity of some communication, particularly when dealing with part time staff.

> We had **no response from Council on areas of uncertainty.**

WHITTLESEA

> We were satisfied with the willingness of the planning department to be **open minded** about our application and their **ability to liase** with DELWP to negotiate a particular interpretation of the PSP.

> It depends on the officer, but at times **comments have been quite illogical and inconsistent.**

> Responses to applications have been **quite slow** which can really hold up our timeframes.

HUME

> There was very **little direction or guidance provided at the initial meetings** with Council. It was difficult to gauge their views prior to submission.

> Our view is that some of the delays in the RFI process aren't attributable to any one department, but rather from the **brittleness of some of the internal referral processes.** It seemed that there was an 'on balance' consolidated response.

> RFI's came through at different times and often **weren't coordinated.**

> **lack of communication** from assessment officers - responsiveness to emails and calls were poor.

> The Statutory Planning section is **hamstrung** by Strategic Planning, who have too much input... Engineering influence on decisions are **too rigid** and **stifles good design** outcomes.

MITCHELL

> Council **kept us informed** of where the application was at, and dealt with issues preventing certification **proactively.**

Figure 12 External communication - Industry feedback

Internal Communication + Culture

This benchmark takes into consideration the internal organisational approach to internal collaboration, approaches to and the empowerment of leaders, and their of officers and their sense of confidence to make decisions.

Data for this benchmark has primarily been sourced from the council questionnaire (in particular, questions relating to self-assessed skill strengths and decision making approaches), Mesh's observations during the workshops, and the industry feedback.

Taking into consideration the internal organisational approach to collaboration, empowerment of leaders and their of officers and their sense of confidence to make decisions.

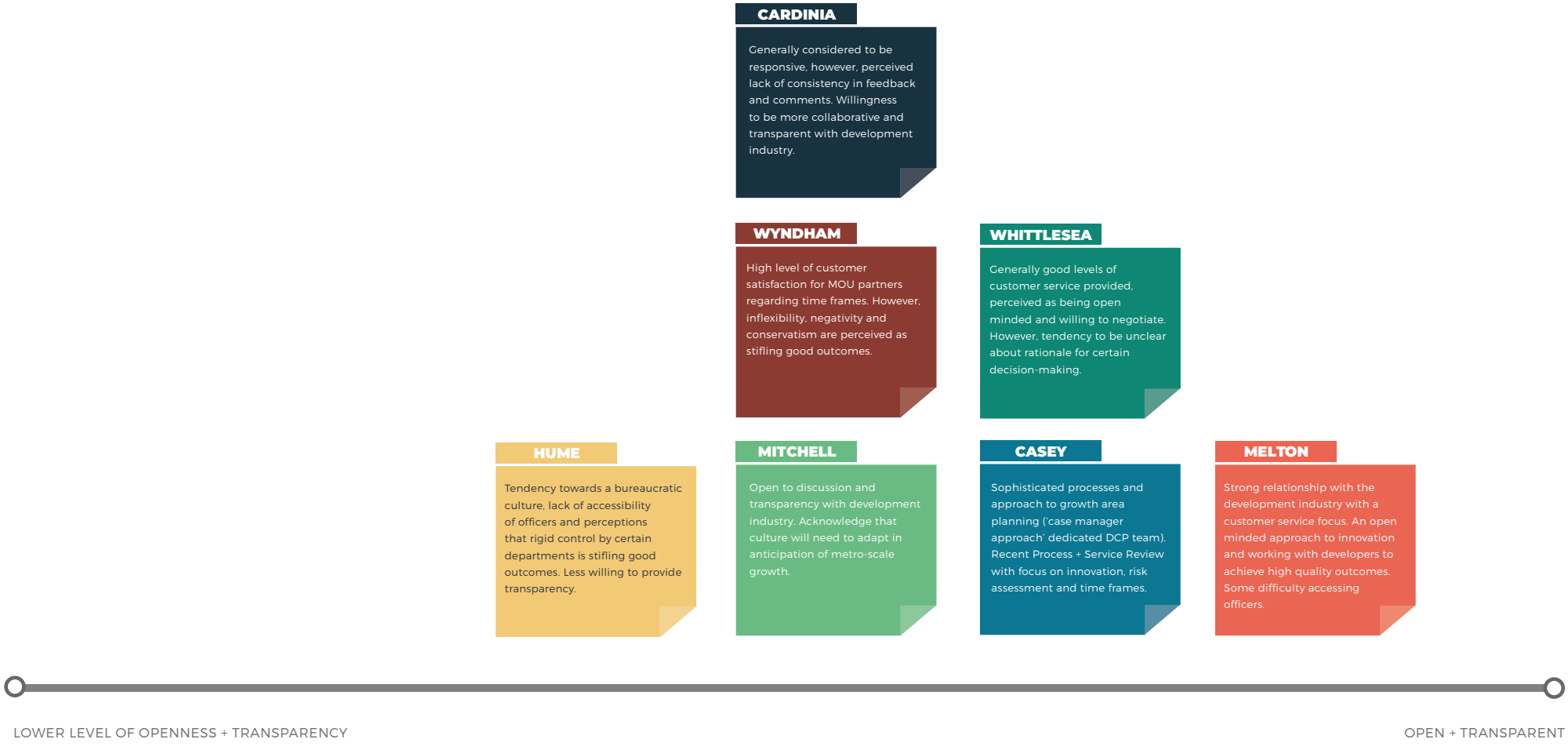

Figure 13 Internal Communication and Culture Benchmark

Internal

CASEY

Casey has developed an organisational structure that emphasises the role of the Principal Planner as the 'case manager' of growth area planning permit applications. This means that the planner has ultimate responsibility to make autonomous decisions (referred to as 'captains calls') on most matters (full delegation for permit decisions, except refusals). Notwithstanding, Casey's internal departments also hold a lot of sway during the internal referrals process, and are involved at multiple times throughout the process (often beyond the initial internal referral). Officers have recognised that there is lack of clarity of the scope of an internal departments' roles and responsibilities, which at times, has resulted in 'over reach' in terms of requirements and obligations placed on developers. This tends to complicate and delay the decision-making process, and can be unreasonably burdensome on developers.

It has also been observed that while planners are empowered to make decisions; they are often reluctant to do so without obtaining the specific advice and consent from internal departments (requiring multiple referrals). This has been attributed to the increasing complexity of planning generally, which impacts on planners' confidence to take autonomous decisions.

Officers consider that they have very effective project management and relationship building skills.

Casey's 'case manager' approach can be used to greater effect if the roles and responsibilities of internal referral departments were clarified and formalised to provide a more structured and targeted understanding of the scope of the Advice to be provided.

CARDINIA

Cardinia has empowered Principal Planners and Senior Planners with autonomous decision making (including permit sign off), who take the lead on each application for the duration of the planning assessment. During the plans approval phase (FLPs and construction plans), the engineers tend to take the lead. Cardinia consider that they have very effective project management skills and creative problem solving skills, however, only somewhat effective relationship building skills.

Notwithstanding, a particularly strong collaborative relationship was observed between the planning and engineering teams, as well as with the subdivision officers. However, officers acknowledged that there could be a lack of open collaboration with some other internal departments (particularly those whose core function is not growth area assessment), which tends to frustrate the process (particularly at the statement of compliance phase). In general, applications are referred internally 2 to 3 times, and officers acknowledge they do not always speak with a single council 'voice'.

Cardinia's planning team noted that they seek to foster a culture of open communication and learning within the team, through regular meetings (every second day), that enable planners to raise issues with the coordinator. This enhances officer confidence in decision-making.

It was noted that there is no formal escalation process, however there is a high level of trust of officers' decision-making by Councillors, with the growth area permit assessment process rarely becoming political.

Cardinia has a collaborative and open communication style within the immediate permit assessment teams (planners, engineers and subdivisions officers), and high level of trust of planners as decision-makers. Opportunities exist to tighten the process to ensure council speaks with a single 'voice'.

HUME

Hume have identified internal communication as a key area for improvement. Officers have acknowledged that while there are general procedures that are followed, there tends to be a lack of certainty about roles and responsibilities, particularly with regard to internal referral departments, and an informality in approach to referral follow up.

Decision-making tends to occur at internal meetings attended by representatives from various internal departments (either regular monthly meetings, or application-specific meetings), and as such, feedback to applicants does not always represent a single council 'voice'. It has been observed that the engineering, environment and strategic planning departments influence the decision-making process, which impacts the management of applications, and the timeliness of decisions. Hume officers appear to meet regularly internally, however the delays in decision-making brings into question the effectiveness of this as an internal communication method.

Officers noted that they consider that their project management skills are only somewhat effective, acknowledging that there is substantial room for improvement, while they consider they have very effective relationship building skills.

Hume has recognised the need to articulate roles, responsibilities and procedures to bring a more formalised project management approach to planning permit assessment.

There is opportunity to explore more flexible, efficient and targeted communication methodologies.

MELTON

Melton has developed a strong internal culture with a 'can do' attitude towards growth area planning. The internal decision making framework is clear with the planner being the project manager/decision maker for the life of the project (pre application to statement of compliance).

A high level of internal collaboration exists, with very strong relationships between planning (who also manage subdivision and development contributions), engineering, urban design, landscape and environment. Notably, these Units sit within the one Directorate which undoubtedly contributes to the high level of collaboration.

While Melton has its formal referral process, to expedite matters outside of the referral process often informal discussions between the Units are undertaken to resolve a particular issue in a timely manner.

The positive internal culture is reflected in the customer service received by the development industry, where strong relationships generally exist.

Notwithstanding the above, staffing issues (includes long periods of time with no coordinator) over recent years has undoubtedly resulted in the planners being overworked and possibly the level of service and communication to the development industry being compromised at times. As the Unit has not had a Coordinator in recent years, this has also contributed to the roles, responsibility and decision making (both internal and external) not being as clear as they could be.

A lack of leadership in recent years for the Major Development Unit and staff stability has impacted on the ability of the planners to retain the high level of service previously provided. Opportunities now exist to regroup and clarify roles, responsibilities and processes across Departments.

MITCHELL

Mitchell has a very small team of officers who work on growth area planning permit applicants (generally comprising a planner and an engineer). While these officers work in different offices (Wallan and Broadford), they have a close, collaborative relationship that is maintained by regular phone and email communication. As a result, they are able to be adaptable and flexible when it comes to responding to referrals. This open communication style relies on the current low volume of applications (compared to other growth area councils), and as such, may present risks as the scale and pace of growth accelerates.

The planning application is managed by the planner during the planning assessment, after which it generally transitions to the engineers for plan approvals and construction supervision. Certification and SOC oversight are undertaken collectively.

Mitchell is the only council of the seven who doesn't provide delegation to its planning officers for permit decisions. Permit approval decisions are generally taken at a Committee level (members include the CEO, directors, and managers), although more controversial decisions are required to be decided on by Councillors at a Council meeting. While council officers have sought to build a relationship of trust and understanding with councillors, growth area planning decisions remain quite political (attributable in some part to the ward structure).

As the scale and pace of development increases, it will be important for Mitchell to reinforce a 'growth area' mentality and culture across the broader organisation (including at Councillor level), and develop new communication and collaboration approaches that is responsive to this change.

WHITTLESEA

Whittlesea has developed a strong internal culture with a positive attitude towards growth area planning including an open minded approach and willing to negotiate with developers.

A high level of internal collaboration exists, with strong relationships between key units that have a role in growth area planning. The longstanding PAT process which relates to internal referrals and collaboration between Departments has undoubtably created a successful internal referral framework for a number of years. While the formalised PAT process is in place, officers will also undertake informal discussions to resolve matters when this approach is considered the quickest way to resolve an issue without the need to rely on the PAT process.

While the planners are empowered as the decision makers, there is a tendency for the planners to be very reliant on referrals (often numerous referrals) to make a decision and at times the rational for a decision are not clear nor understood by the developer.

The long withstanding PAT process has delivered a successful internal referral framework for a number of years. However, refinement is now required to minimise common referrals and remove the need for numerous referrals.

Council has a long established growth area planning framework in place to manage the permit application process. Opportunities now exist to regroup and clarify roles, responsibilities and processes across the organisation.

WYNDHAM

Wyndham have been a pioneer for innovative processes in regard to the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU has required a high level of internal commitment in order to achieve the targeted timeframes, which exceeds the standard timeframes for referrals and responding to planning permit applications. The industry recognise the MOU as a success and the commitment of Council to this process is commended. Wyndham generally has a positive attitude towards growth area planning with a high level of internal collaboration. However, when engaging with the development industry, the industry is often fronted with a very rigid approach to growth area planning with little room for flexibility or negotiation.

The Wyndham internal referral process requires a high level of internal collaboration, with planning officers generally not empowered as leaders, with a heavy reliance on the Engineering Department (and others) to make a decision. The reliance on the Engineering Department is largely driven by Council having an emphasis on infrastructure led sequencing of development. Due to the strong focus on infrastructure delivery, there is currently a lack of balance between empowering the planners as the decision makers and other internal departments taking the lead as the decision maker. This has resulted in planning officers often not having the confidence to make a decision and decisions not being made in a swift and timely manner.

While Council has an established internal referral process in place, refinement is now required to minimise common referrals, remove the need for numerous referrals and reinforce 'one bit at the cherry' style of assessment. The growth area planning decision making framework is spread across Council with planning officers not empowered as the decision maker. A need to rebalance the empowerment of the planning officer is required to assist with improving the decision making process including decisions being made in a timely manner.

External Communication + Culture

Benchmarked according to transparency and relationships with development industry, willingness to negotiate, openness to innovation/new ways of doing things and customer service versus bureaucratic culture.

Taking into consideration transparency, willingness to negotiate and openness to innovation.

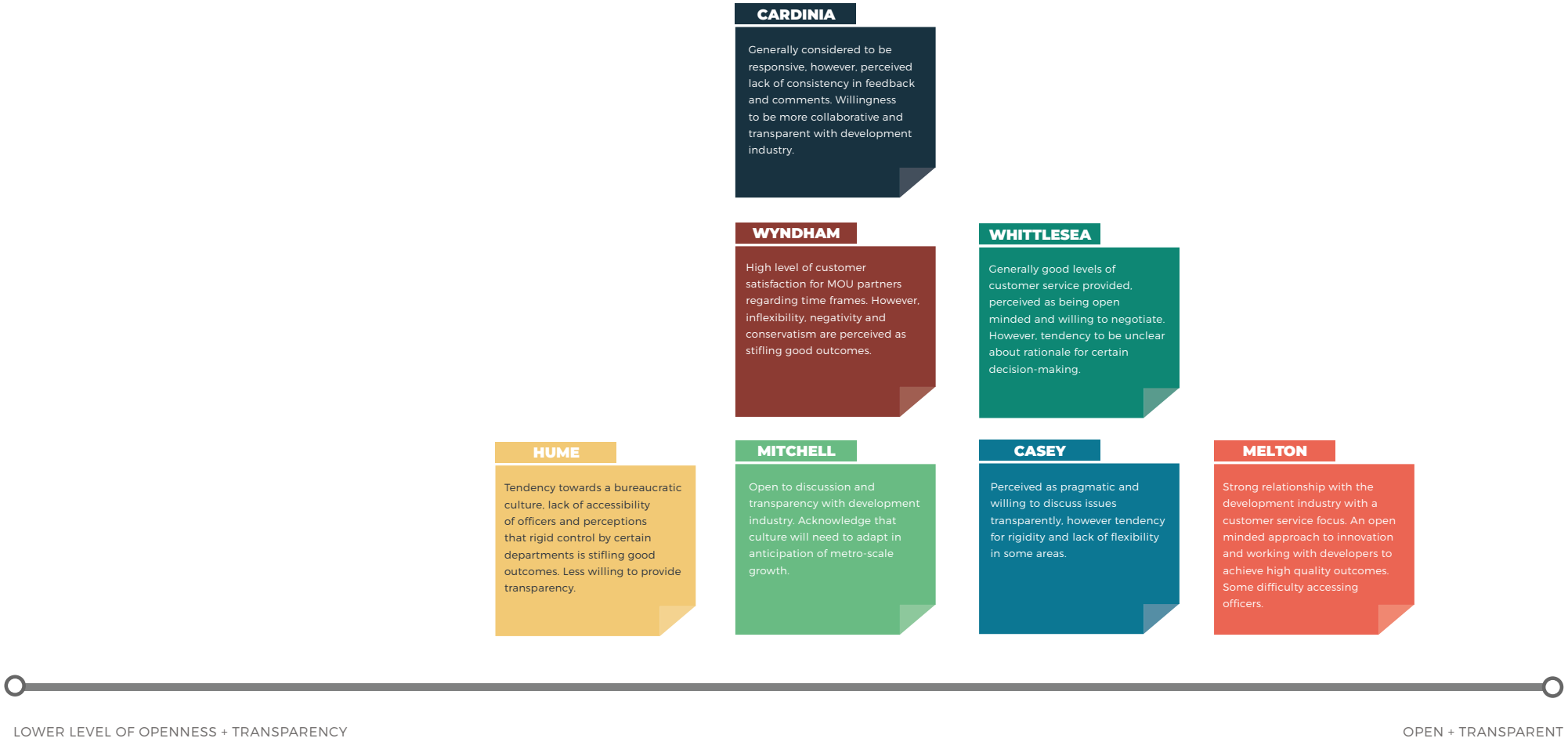

Figure 14 External Communication and Culture Benchmark

PART 2.

External

CASEY

Casey has developed a strong professional relationship with the development industry, with a clear customer service focus – the development industry is recognised as playing an important role in the delivery of new communities. Casey is perceived as being relatively transparent and pragmatic, and in general, officers are accessible and willing to discuss issues constructively. However, the industry also perceives that Casey officers tend to be rigid in their adherence to standards, and unwilling to negotiate variations to these standards (including variations to conditions).

The end to end management of applications by the planners is recognised and seen as valuable by the industry. However, while Casey empowers planners to make 'captains calls', there are perceptions that some departments are able to veto the planners (particularly in relation to open space). The engineering department has been identified as a "highly functioning" department, providing open communication with the industry and a willingness to be adaptable and flexible in response to industry needs.

Casey has a reputation of working with developers to achieve positive outcomes through partnerships (e.g. Selandra Rise). This partnership approach is being extended now into a number of MOUs between council and a set of developers. These MOUs seek to achieve improved timeframes through developer funded resources, but also seek to explore new innovations that can be of broader value. Casey see these MOUs as an extension of Wyndham MOUs based on their experiences and learnings.

Notwithstanding the above, Casey officers consider that their understanding of property development economics is only somewhat effective and are keen to improve their understanding of the needs of the development industry. There is also recognition at officer level that there are opportunities for greater transparency of decision-making.

Casey has recognised that there are opportunities to extend their current customer service and 'case manager' approach to the next level.

Actions should be targeted at building a greater level of trust and understanding between council and the development industry, which can be leveraged into more innovative approaches and outcomes in growth area communities.

CARDINIA

Cardinia is generally perceived as a responsive council, where officers are accessible and willing to discuss general updates on applications. However, there is a perception that due to the inexperience of officers, there is a reluctance to provide meaningful feedback early in the process (for example, through pre-application discussions and preliminary review phases). This tendency to reserve a neutral position until the full (or majority of) assessment has been completed has been acknowledged by officers, and is a clear example of a disconnect in expectations between the industry and council.

Officers have recognised that developing relationships with the industry is important, and as such, allocate applications to planners on the basis of developer. This is seen as a way of building trust and improving continuity of advice and decision-making (industry have noted a tendency toward conflicting advice, or advice changing throughout the process – often due to turnover of staff). Officers have noted that while they work efficiently with the two primary developers in the area (Satterley and Parklea), they spend a lot of time 'coaching' small-scale developers and consultants, who are less familiar with growth area procedures and information approaches.

Cardinia expressed a willingness to be completely open and transparent with the development industry about their decision-making processes – they see that there can be positive outcomes achieved in terms of consistency of decision-making and building trust. Officers see that they only have a somewhat effective understanding of property development economics, and have noted that at times they do not understand the motivations of the development industry. In general, officers consider that they are able to negotiate out most issues effectively with developers, however, have acknowledged that there have been key conflict points, specifically in relation to DCP implementation.

There appears to be a gap in understanding the needs and commercial motivations of the development industry, which is reflected in council's approach to assessment and provision of meaningful advice. However, there is a willingness to breach this gap.

Cardinia's growth areas have historically been controlled by two key mid-scale developers. As new PSPs are approved, new developers will emerge, requiring establishment of a new set of relationships. There is opportunity to take a proactive approach to working with a new set of developers and consultants (large and small).

HUME

Hume have an organisation-wide stated focus on customer service. However, the experience of the development industry is that officers have a tendency to be bureaucratic, preferring to use formal communication means (that take a lot of time to prepare) over more informal means (phone and email). The lack of accessibility of council officers via phone and email has been noted as a key issue, which delays resolution of more minor matters. Hume officers are willing to hold meetings to discuss applications (often attended by a broad range of council officers from various departments), however, there is considered to be a general lack of direction and guidance in the feedback provided. Officers appear to be unwilling to provide certainty on key issues until the very late stages of assessment, and are also perceived as unwilling to exercise discretion to achieve alternative outcomes. Like Cardinia, this is reflective of a key disconnect in expectations between the industry and council.

Hume does not adopt an 'end to end' case manager approach to applications, and as such, the industry perceives that there is a lack of consistency and integration from internal referral departments . RFI responses in particular have been singled out as lacking an 'on balance' approach to internal feedback, and that at times, requests for information are seen as either unnecessary or beyond the scope of council's authority. Hume officers appear to have a critical view of the motivations of the development industry, and are unwilling to adopt flexible approaches (for example, early review of construction plans), that other councils adopt as pragmatic responses to the complexities of development, where as Hume has left it to an opt-in approach as opposed to mandatory because it believes it does not appear to benefit the developer. Officers acknowledge that their decision-making is often not transparent to the development industry, but have resisted suggestions for more openness and transparency on grounds that it will further delay timeframes.

There are opportunities to improve transparency in processes and decision-making, that will contribute to building trust with the development industry, improving consistency across the organisation and recalibrating power-balances across the assessment process. Communication with the development industry and consistency of approach would be improved by a more 'end to end'/case manager focus on application management (for example, one where an officer is responsible for shepherding the application through from pre-application to SOC, and where the responsible officer has decision-making responsibility at each step).

MELTON

Melton prides themselves on having a strong working relationship with the development industry with a focus on providing a high level of customer service. Melton is one of the few Councils that has an internal framework that does not get caught up in red tape and this assists in Council being perceived as relatively transparent and pragmatic, and in general, officers are accessible and willing to discuss issues constructively. The end to end management of applications by the planners is also recognised and seen as valuable by the industry. As part of Council's commitment to a providing a high level of customer service, communication with the development industry is recognised as in important component. Council have instigated a number of developer forums and regular newsletters over the years. However, in recent times, largely due to staff turnover and existing workloads, both the developer forums and newsletters have dropped off. Despite the positive relationship that exists with the development industry, there has been some criticism in regards to planners not always providing a single voice of Council and conflicting advice being provided. Staff turnover, excessive workloads and the Major Developments team lacking leadership for an extensive period, has undoubtedly contributed to the quality of external advice provided.

A collaborative and open-minded approach to growth area planning who take pride in providing a high level of customer service. Reinstatement of the developer forum and newsletters is important in order to continue providing a high level of service and collaboration with the development industry. With new leadership and a now established Major Development Unit in place, opportunities now exist for the Unit to regroup and review workloads and existing processes, including quality checks of correspondence.

MITCHELL

Mitchell is unique from other councils in the Health Check, as they do not currently have any active applications within PSP areas – all current applications within PSP areas are ghost applications. As such, very little industry feedback was received. Notwithstanding, Council's approach has been observed as being open and transparent, with a willingness to negotiate alternative solutions and outcomes.

Council officers have acknowledged that in the past, they have lacked experience dealing with the complexity of growth area development, and as such, often allowed the developer to take the lead, resulting in ad hoc outcomes. It is apparent that council is transitioning away from this approach to a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to growth area planning, but may still struggle in terms of resources and level of experience in the short to medium term.

Mitchell has demonstrated a proactiveness in dealing with ghost permit issues ahead of formal PSP approval. This flexibility is appreciated by the industry. Mitchell have also recognised that new large scale developers/ landholders in the new PSP areas present substantial opportunity for adopting a partnership-based approach to managing growth in a manner that achieves innovative outcomes.

Mitchell are well-positioned to further develop their current open and proactive approach into a genuine positive partnership approach with future large scale developers/landholders in new growth areas.

WHITTLESEA

Whittlesea's long legacy with growth area planning has resulted in Council being recognised across the development industry as a Council open for business, with a willingness to facilitate and negotiate while generally providing a good level of customer service. Whittlesea is generally perceived as a responsive Council, where officers are accessible and willing to discuss general updates on applications.

However, Council have been criticised at times in regard to their decision making. Industry feedback indicates that decisions do not always make clear and logical sense. Often planning officers are unable to provide clear advice without the need for further internal discussions/referrals which can result in a number of re-referrals and delays in making swift and timely decisions.

Whittlesea has many positives in regard to their relationship with the development industry including a non-bureaucratic culture that is not overly restricted by red tape. However, satisfaction of the development industry was surprisingly low in response to the industry survey when compared to other growth area Council's. Council is currently undertaking minimal steps to enhance their relationship with the industry, such as the same officer consistently undertaking a developers work, developer forums or newsletters.

There are opportunities to improve transparency in processes and decision-making, that will contribute to building trust with the development industry, improving consistency across the organisation and recalibrating power-balances across the assessment process. Increasing engagement with the development industry through developer forums will assist in enhancing relationships.

WYNDHAM

Wyndham have implemented the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (developer pays approach) which is recognised as providing customer service above and beyond statutory requirements and seen as a success both by Council and the developer industry. However, outside of the MOU process, relationships with the development industry is at the lower end of satisfaction when compared to other growth Councils. Council is also not undertaking any steps to improve relationships with the industry, such as developer forums or newsletters. Council is recognised as having a bureaucratic culture that is generally not open to innovation or ways of doing things differently which is largely due to the risk adverse position Council have adopted. The risk adverse approach is recognised as often resulting in standard engineering outcomes and a lack of innovation and developers of the view that Council is inflexible and unwilling to negotiate. Often planning officers are unable to provide clear advice without the need for further internal discussions/referrals which can result in a number of re-referrals and delays in making swift and timely decisions, which reflects the lack of planning empowerment in the decision making process. Notwithstanding the above, Wyndham officers consider that their understanding of property development economics is only somewhat effective and are keen to improve their understanding of the needs of the development industry.

There is a high level of industry satisfaction with the MOU process. There is now opportunity to review the MOU to explore opportunities for incorporating innovation and creativity. The risk adverse approach of Council is impacting on the delivery of innovative development outcomes which industry is perceiving Council as being unwilling to negotiate. Opportunities exist to rebalance between risk and achieving superior development outcomes. Increasing engagement with the development industry through developer forums will assist in enhancing relationships.

mesh

PART 2.

03

PROCESS

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Introduction

The processes benchmark compares the different internal methods that Council have of working through development applications. Within Council there are instances of both formalised processes, that are structured and documented, as well as less formalised processes, that have begun more organically. Both of these styles of processes are important as each has their own strengths and merits. Different councils also have different levels of comfort with risk – including varying standards and facilitating innovation.

This benchmark measures the following:

TIMEFRAMES

Swifter assessment processes are the overriding objective of this Health Check. This benchmark looks at approval timeframes at different stages of the assessment process, to identify sources of delays.

ADAPTABILITY AND RISK

Better decisions are also part of the overriding objective of this Health Check. This benchmark gauges councils' level of comfort with adapting processes, and accepting risk, in order to achieve better outcomes.

Summary of Actions

Overall

› Urban Growth Zone Audit

› Conditions Management Tool

Casey

› Growth Area Standard Permit Conditions Review

› Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency

› Pre-application Process Reviews

Cardinia

› Growth Area Standard Permit Conditions Review

› Pre-application Process Review

› Review of SOC Processes

Hume

› Workflow Procedures and Targets

› Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency

› Pre-Application Process Review

› Construction Plans Process Review

Melton

› Review of SOC Process

› Delegate Report Templates and Improvements

› Quality Check System

Mitchell

› Workflow Procedures and Targets

› Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency

› Plan Assessment Guidelines and Templates

Whittlesea

› Administrative Process Review

› Pre-Application Process Review

› Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency

› Functional Layout Plans Requirements and Process Review

› Construction Plans Process Reviews

› Open Space Embellishment Review

Wyndham

› Internal Referral Process Review

› MOU Review

› Overall Process Review in accordance with the Vanguard Method

› Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency

› Construction Plans Process Review

OVERALL DURATION OF PROCESSES

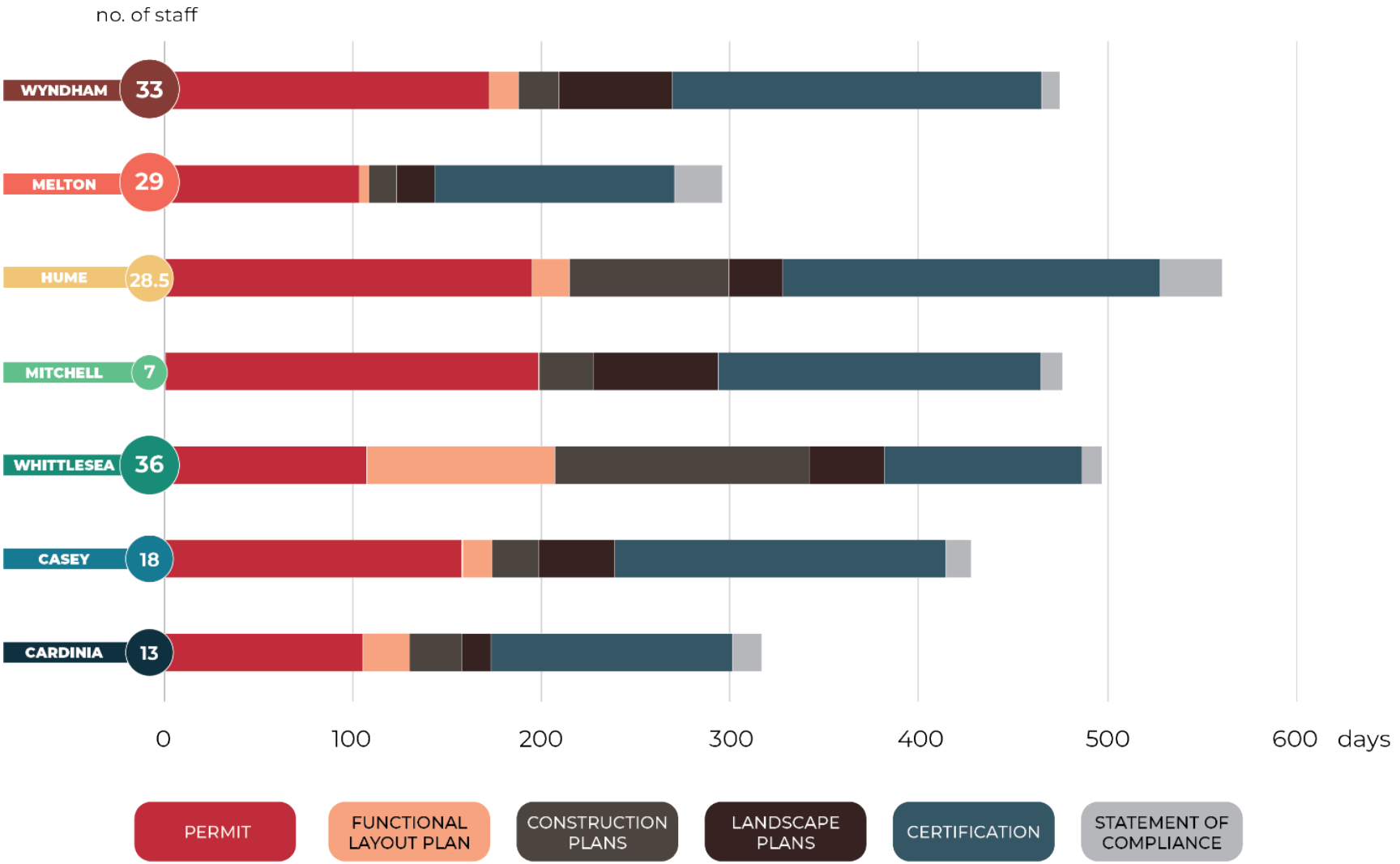

Figure 15 Assessment Timeframes - Permit lodgement to Statement of Compliance.
Source: SPEAR Data (2018), PPARS Data (2008-2017), Industry Responses Health Check (2019)

WHAT CONTRIBUTES MOST TO THE COMPLEXITY OF AN APPLICATION?

A. SCALE OF APPLICATION AREA — CARDINIA, MITCHELL

B. SITE SPECIFIC ISSUES

C. SOPHISTICATION LEVEL OF DEVELOPER — WYNDHAM

D. APPROACH OF OR RELATIONSHIP WITH KEY CONSULTANTS — HUME, WHITTLESEA

E. QUALITY OF URBAN DESIGN / MASTERPLAN LAYOUT

F. QUALITY OF APPLICATION MATERIAL — CASEY, MELTON

G. OTHER

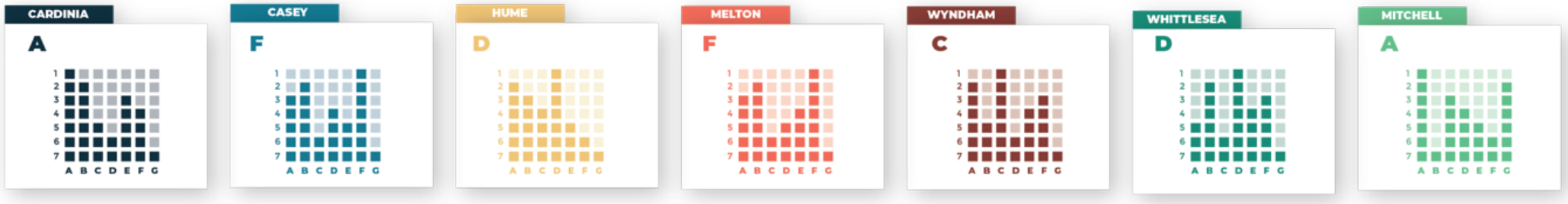

Figure 16 Contributors to complexity of applications

Timeframes

This benchmark takes into consideration time taken by council at different phases of the assessment and approval process.

Data is sourced from PPARS, SPEAR and the council questionnaire. It is important to note that often phases of the project overlap to some extent. Figure 15 provides a summary of the time spent on each phase as if it were undertaken end to end.

Taking into consideration the time taken by council at different phases of the assessment and approval process.

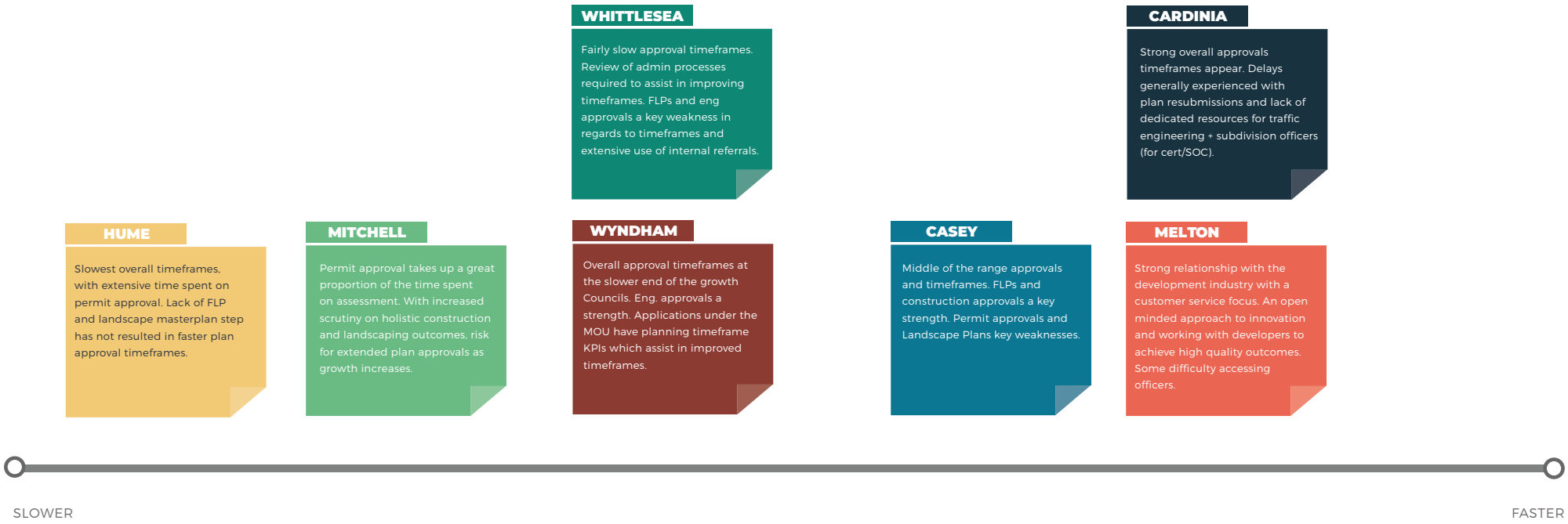

Figure 17 Timeframes Benchmark

PART 2.

Timeframes

CASEY

Casey's overall timeframes from lodgement to SOC are middle of the range. Casey's planning permit approval process is one of the longer assessment processes in the Health Check, while plans approvals (FLPs and construction plans) were one of the most efficient. The landscape approvals process was identified as a key weakness, primarily because it sits somewhat outside the growth area planning assessment process (it does not sit clearly within the purview of the Principal Planner as case manager).

As previously mentioned, Casey has well established processes and procedures in place (particularly in relation to infrastructure delivery, DCPs and WIK agreements), which are well supported by technological resources. However, officers have identified that there are opportunities for small scale improvements, such as reducing timeframes from lodgement to allocation (this has been recognised by MOU partners as a key saving), updating UGZ requirements, and reducing time spent on preparation of delegate reports (reporting by exception rather than restating accepted detail).

However, the greatest source of delays in the process is the internal referrals/permit negotiation phase, where there are both formal and informal procedures that are used to reach an internal consensus on the application. Many of the actions recommended throughout this report (in relation to other benchmarks) are intended to address this complex issue.

Opportunities were identified to provide greater transparency in terms of decision-making rationale (for example, clear justification for permit conditions) and developing pathways for provision of more meaningful advice when developers are preparing their applications (reviewing the pre-application process).

Casey has well-established processes that would benefit from a light tough in terms of enhancement, including improving transparency and consistency of decision-making and facilitating more 'front loaded' advice and certainty to developers.

CARDINIA

Cardinia's overall timeframes for approval are quite strong, compared to other growth area councils. Cardinia's key strength lies in their permit approval timeframes, plan approval timeframes (for FLPs and construction plans) were average.

Cardinia's use of lodgement software and regular internal meetings means that there aren't delays in allocation of applications to planners. Cardinia has also been noted as being swift in preparation of RFI's. Key delays have been identified when further information is lodged by applicants, and officers are working through the assessment with internal referral departments. Officers note that they all tend to have their own approach to the process, including keeping their own 'standard' conditions, which often have to be varied to respond to the specific of the applications. It was acknowledged that there are opportunities to improve the standard conditions set – to provide robust justification for included conditions, to review information required and when, and to improve sign off accountability at certification and SOC stage (where unnecessary delays were identified due to lack of clarity).

Cardinia has established guidance documents for key components of the growth area planning process (for example, PIP template, DCP flow chart, Design Guidelines information), which they consider assists with streamlining process and making expectations clear to developers. However, officers are reluctant to provide any more specific advice on applications in early phases until all information has been submitted.

Cardinia noted that the key contributors to assessment delays were workload of officers, complexity of issues (requiring repeated input from various officers), and the low quality of submitted material (particularly construction plans and landscape plans).

Cardinia's processes appear to be generally working well from a timeframe's perspective.

There are opportunities to further improve by providing greater transparency and constancy of decision-making. Building confidence of officers to 'front load' advice to applicants (in pre-application discussions) may also assist in improving applications before lodgement.

HUME

Hume has the slowest overall timeframes, attributable primarily to longer permit assessment timeframes, plan approvals and certification procedures.

As noted earlier, Hume does not adopt an 'end to end' case manager approach, and lack formalised procedures for the assessment process. As such, various departments take control of different aspects of the assessment. This method of processing significantly impacts and influences timeframes.

Hume's approach to plan approval is unique amongst the growth area councils – submission of FLPs and landscape masterplans are not required. However, removal of these preliminary plan assessment steps has not resulted in shorter plan approval timeframes. Officers have noted that these long assessment timeframes are generally due to a disproportionate number of resubmissions of plans (sometimes up to 12 times), before they are able to be approved. While poor quality of plans have been nominated as the source of the issue, it has also been observed that Hume Council is one of the few councils that does not exclusively use the EDCM, but also has a suite of Council standards that override the EDCM on some occasions. Lack of consistency of approach across growth area council to standards may be source of confusion by development consultants.

Hume would benefit from more formalised procedures for the assessment workflow from pre-application through to SOC, which sets targets for timeframes, clarifies roles and expectations and identifies where there are opportunities to exercise discretion. Emphasis should be placed on transparency and pragmatic approaches to assessment procedures.

MELTON

While middle of the range in regard to Melton's overall approval timeframes, when reviewing each phase in isolation Council is generally performing well. Melton has clear internal processes including a good understanding of who is responsible for which approvals and where internal collaboration is required or when office empowerment allows an approval without the need for referral.

Melton is seen as an industry leader in regard to engineering approvals (both Functional Layout Plans and Construction Plans) with timeframes far superior to most other growth Councils.

Melton is also providing good timeframes for the approval of Construction Management Plans which is often an approval that is not well managed and regularly causing delay to construction works commencing.

Landscape plan approval is currently seen as a weakness. However, due to a relatively new landscaping unit and Council lifting the bar in regard to the quality of landscape plans and their requirements, approval processes are likely to improve once the industry have a better understanding of Councils requirements.

Clear approval processes in place and industry generally having a good understanding of Council requirements. Melton would benefit from refinement of processes relating to Statement of Compliance (bond returns, management of section 173 Agreements) required to ensure bonds are being returned at the required times and Agreements are being complied with.

MITCHELL

Mitchell is currently one of the slower councils in terms of approvals timeframes, with one of the longest permit assessment timeframes. Engineering plan approvals (FLPs and constructions plans) are comparably swift, landscape plan approvals are quite extended. This is primarily due to not having resources on hand to assess these plans, something that has recently been addressed by appointment of a landscape architect.

As Mitchell is only a new-comer to the realm of growth area councils, it make sense that processes and procedures are still emerging. Officers see great benefit from learning from more experienced councils, and adapting some of their procedures and guidelines.

Permit approval takes up a great proportion of the time spent on assessment which will only extend as growth expands. Now is the time for Mitchell to invest in development of clear processes, procedures and guidelines – most efficiently adapted from other growth area councils.

WHITTLESEA

Overall approval timeframes at the slower end of the growth Councils. However, the planning permit approval process is one of the fastest of growth area Councils.

Notwithstanding the above, this approach has potentially contributed to the slow timeframes for approval of Functional Layout Plans (FLP) and Engineering Plans. The slow approvals for FLPs and Engineering plans have also being linked to Council undertaking internal referrals of these plans where most Councils do not require the referral and the relevant department in empowered to approve the plans.

In regard to the FLPs the planners are currently approving, this is at odds with other growth Councils where the Engineering Departments generally managers the FLP approvals. Approval of Construction Management Plans are also recognised as a weakness.

While Council generally have clear processes for approvals in place there is opportunity for further review to identify efficiencies and reviewing roles and responsibilities of plan approvals therefore limiting the need for internal referrals that could assist in improving approval timeframes.

WYNDHAM

One of the slowest growth Councils in regard to overall approval timeframes. Applications under the MOU have planning timeframe KPIs which assist in improved timeframes, however the MOU is limited in signatories.

For planning permit applications outside of the MOU process Wyndham has one of the slowest approval timeframes for the permit phase when compared to other growth Councils. Approval of Construction Management Plans and Landscape Plans also recognised as a weakness.

Engineering approvals are a strength and Wyndham is one of the leaders in regard to Functional Layout Plans and Engineering Plan approvals.

While Council generally have clear processes for approvals in place there is opportunity for further review to identify efficiencies and reviewing roles and responsibilities to improve plan approval timeframes.

The MOU has committed timeframes to the planning permit process, however opportunities exist to expand the MOU to cover other plan approvals.

Adaptability + Risk

This benchmark looks at how adaptable/flexible council officers are when it comes to their policies and procedures, and how risk adverse council are. This benchmark has been measured taking into consideration review of policies, procedures, standard permit conditions and delegates reports, as well as Mesh's general observations during workshops.

This benchmark looks at how adaptable/flexible council officers are when it comes to their policies and procedures.

WHITTLESEA

A strong framework in place to allow innovation. However, challenges in confidently making decisions on complex matters without extensive consultation and review.

WYNDHAM

Not recognised as a leader in innovation. Applies a fairly rigid approach to development with limited flexibility to adopt alternative approaches. Engineering team requires strict adherence to standards.

HUME

While not necessarily having strict policies in place, generally decisions are taking deferring to standards. Openness to new approaches is generally limited. Engineering standards tend to dominate.

CASEY

Recognises that as they have matured, their ability to be agile and respond flexibly to innovation has suffered. Principal planners have decision-making power, but sometimes lack confidence to use it.

MITCHELL

Permit approval takes up a great proportion of the time spent on assessment. With increased scrutiny on holistic construction and landscaping outcomes, risk for extended plan approvals as growth increases.

CARDINIA

Generally try to take an open and flexible approach, however, recognise this is difficult given the complexity of issues. High level of trust of officers at Councillor level. Decisions tend not to get political.

MELTON

Approaches development with a 'can do' attitude. Clear processes and policies in place. A willingness to achieve superior and innovative development outcomes when appropriate opportunities arise.

LESS ADAPTABLE / MORE RISK ADVERSE

MORE ADAPTABLE / MORE RISK TOLERANT

Figure 18 Adaptability and Risk Benchmark

PART 2.

Adaptability + Risk

CASEY

Casey has reached a level of maturity where they have developed a clear set of policies and procedures. However, the flip side of this maturity has been a tendency toward conservatism and avoidance of risk.

Casey is keen to adopt agile processes to achieve innovative outcomes through planning assessment processes. However, officers have recognised that the current 'risk settings' across the broader organisation are a key barrier.

Mesh have observed occasions where Casey has taken, as a matter of policy, particularly risk adverse approaches to aspects of the growth area assessment process with regard to certification. For example, Casey requires a greater level of certainty at the certification stage than most other councils; requiring resolution of matters prior to certification, that others would defer until statement of compliance. While there are solid reasons for these policies, the policies have a disproportionate impact on the ability of developers to efficiently and effectively roll out their development program. Officers have recognised that there is benefit in auditing and recalibrating these risk settings to ensure that they are set at a level that will bring the best value to council, the community and the development industry.

In addition, officers directly involved in permit assessment have identified that there are opportunities to work more proactively with internal departments that have only a peripheral role in growth area planning. In doing so, they will be able to get greater value from these departments, and provide more certainty to the development industry.

Casey seeks to enhance innovation and creativity in growth area outcomes, which will require a recalibration of council's current risk settings across the organisation.

CARDINIA

Cardinia consider that they generally take and open and flexible approach to growth area assessment. However, they recognise that this can be difficult given the complexity of issues faced.

Given there is such as high level of trust between councillors and officers, Cardinia is well placed to explore new innovative outcomes and approaches to doing things. The key will be ensuring that officers have enough confidence to understand where discretion can be exercised, and where adaptation of current standards can have positive benefits.

As the confidence of officers grow, the willingness to be more adaptable to achieve greater innovations will follow.

HUME

Hume are well known in the industry to be particularly risk adverse in terms of maintenance obligations. As such, there is a perception that alternative design outcomes for streetscapes, open space etc will generally not be accepted if they do not align precisely with council policies and standards.

Officer have also been observed as being particularly rigid when it comes to process. For example, Hume's engineers insist on a linear approach to assessment, where construction plans are not reviewed prior to certification of plans of subdivision i.e. during permit application phase prior to issue of permit. While this is strictly the accurate process (i.e. linear), it does not demonstrate a flexible and pragmatic approach to the complexities of development.

Opportunities to review approaches to standards and processes in a more facilitative manner.

MELTON

Melton has reached a level of maturity where they have developed a clear set of policies and procedures that are generally well understood by the development industry. Melton is recognised within the development industry as a Council that is willing to be adaptable and flexible to achieve superior development outcomes. Council has a good approach to balancing risk with innovation and are willing to explore innovative ideas without initially shutting an idea down before it has been further considered.

This is also reflected in Councils practical approach to Certification and Statement of Compliance, where a non-obstructive attitude is applied to assist developers achieving Certification or Statement of Compliance without unnecessary delay. However, Council also understand that there are times when matters do require resolution prior to Certification of Statement of Compliance being issued which is highly appropriate.

Achieves a good balance between risk and innovation while approaching growth area planning with a facilitative attitude.

MITCHELL

Mitchell has an open and flexible approach at the officer level, however in the past this openness has, in some instances, been exploited by developers and resulted in ad hoc and poor development outcomes. As such, councillors and the executive have adopted a level of conservatism in decision-making (permits are approved at committee or Councillor level). It will be important for council officers to build a level of trust with Councillors as Mitchell gears up for a more holistic approach to growth area planning via implementation of the new PSPs.

Mitchell is also well-placed, due to certain landholders in new PSP areas, to be at the forefront of innovations in urban development. It will be important that Mitchell seizes this opportunity by developing a partnership approach with these key landholders, to ensure a long term collective vision is established as a framework for new innovations.

Well-placed to be at the forefront of development innovations given landholders present in corridor, and emerging status as a growth area council. Building trust at Councillor level will be critical.

WHITTLESEA

Whittlesea is generally recognised across the development industry as a Council open for business, with a willingness to facilitate, negotiate and take a practical approach towards growth area development.

Council generally has a good approach to balancing risk with innovation and are willing to explore innovative ideas without shutting them down before they have been further considered.

However, Council have been criticised at times in regard to their decision making and their ability to make a decision on an issue, in particular where it may be a matter that is innovative or outside the norm. Industry feedback indicates that decisions do not always make clear and logical sense, while also requiring extensive internal consultation in order to reach a decision.

It has been observed that Whittlesea often seeks to resolve many issues up front (before permit issue), rather than deferring them to later stages by permit conditions. While the desire for more certainty is understood, it can at times appear as wasted effort, as developers often change their plans, design and staging multiple times during the project.

Whittlesea generally achieve a good balance between risk and innovation, whilst approaching growth area planning with a facilitative attitude. Requires review of internal process to assist empowering Council officers to make informed decision in a swift and timely manner on behalf of Council. The review should also have consideration of the most appropriate time in the process for an issue to be resolved.

WYNDHAM

Wyndham have developed a reputation in the development industry for their rigid approach to growth area planning that is generally not open to innovation or ways of doing things differently. This is largely due to the risk adverse position Council have adopted.

This is particularly evident in regard to engineering outcomes where there is a lack of willingness to achieve superior outcomes to the required standards. Wyndham's concerns over maintenance requirements have also been a large hurdle for developers in achieving unique open space outcomes, where Council is not willing to take on future maintenance obligations beyond their stand open space requirements.

Wyndham currently lack balance between adaptability, flexibility and risk. Requires further review to rebalance the risk based, rigid approach to growth area development.

PART 2.

04

RESOURCES

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Introduction

The resources benchmark considers the current assets that Council have at their disposal to run their operations. Firstly, it will look at the number of employees Councils have within their growth area department and then break this down into their subsequent teams and roles.

Secondly, it will consider the current technology that Councils' are using in their operations.

This benchmark measures the following:

STAFF

Looks at the structure of teams, number of staff, experience and skills of staff.

TECHNOLOGY

Looks at types of technology employed to increase efficiency and effectiveness of staff and processes.

Summary of Actions

Overall

- Specialised Growth Area SPEAR Training Program
- Outer Metropolitan Graduate Program
- Centralised Urban Design and Facilitation Advice Resources

Casey

- Peer Review Committee
- Enhancements to Casey Permit Lodgement Portal

Cardinia

- Expansion of the Development Contributions Management Tool
- Infrastructure Sequencing Tool
- Additional Staff Resource – Traffic Engineer
- Employment and Activity Centre Planning and Design Assistance

Hume

- Additional Staff Resource – Project Facilitator
- Digital Improvement Plan
- SPEAR for Multi-Lot Subdivisions Trial

Melton

- Digital Improvement Plan
- Electronic Lodgement Tool for Planning Permit Applications
- Development Contribution Technology Enhancement
- Infrastructure Sequencing Tool
- Website Content – Review and Enhance

Mitchell

- Additional Staff Resource – Planning and Engineering
- Digital Improvement Plan
- SPEAR for Multi-Lot Subdivisions

Whittlesea

- Website and Counter Content Improvements
- Electronic Lodgement of Planning Applications Expanded

Wyndham

- Website and Counter Content Improvements
- Digital Improvements Plan

Staff

This benchmark looks at staff resources dedicated to growth area planning assessments, investment in staff training and mentoring etc, and staff self-reported skills. Data has been taken primarily from the council questionnaire.

Figure 19 Staff resources involved in growth area planning

CASEY

Well resourced team of Statutory Planners dedicated to growth area planning. Integrates well with other associated departments, incl. City Planning (DCPs) and Development Engineering.

MITCHELL

Small team at present but recent investment in recruitment of skilled staff in anticipation of growth (strategic planning, landscape architect, urban design etc).

CARDINIA

Dedicated growth area team of statutory and strategic planners. Good relationship with other departments involved in process. Struggle to recruit and train new staff. Kay gap - traffic eng. and subdivision officers

HUME

Dedicated growth area team of Statutory Planners and Subdivision officers. Work closely with Engineers and Strategic Planning (DCPs).

WYNDHAM

Reasonably well resources across a range of Council departments that have a role in growth area planning. Willing to invest in staff through mentoring and training opportunities.

MELTON

Generally well resourced with a team dedicated to growth area planning that is well supported by other departments. Willing to invest in staff through mentoring and training opportunities.

WHITTLESEA

Well resourced although recognised that most officers are working at capacity. Strong supporter of developing and investing in staff. Growth Area application are at times allocated to other teams.

LESS RESOURCED

HIGHLY RESOURCED

Figure 20 Staff Resourcing Benchmark

PART 2.

Staff

CASEY

Casey has a well-developed organisational structure for dealing with growth area planning permit applications. This structure comprises a dedicated growth are planning team of statutory planners and subdivisions officers. Statutory planners, who act as 'case managers' for applications, are Principal Planners (3), with a senior level of growth area planning experience, supported by contractor planners. These officers have noted that they are generally working over capacity. Casey has responded by seeking to secure additional resources through MOU's with the development industry.

The planners work closely with the Subdivisions and Development Engineering Team, which comprises subdivision engineers, development engineers, traffic engineers and drainage engineers. Casey's engineering team appears relatively lean, yet highly specialised, when compared with other council's – however data shows that this team appears to be working efficiently and effectively.

The statutory planners also work closely with the City Planning Team, who are responsible for negotiation of DCP and WIK agreements. Casey is well regarded in the industry for their professional and proactive approach to DCP management, and the DCP team is well resourced with specialists in engineering and DCP accounting.

Casey officers do not generally involve urban designers or community officers in growth are planning permit assessment.

Casey have observed that they struggle to recruit experienced planners and engineers due to distance, competition with the development industry, and a general lack of graduate interest in growth area planning. As such, Casey has recently started recruiting from interstate and adjacent planning fields and industries.

Operates with a relatively lean team of officers, adopting an end to end 'case manager' approach lead by experienced Principal Planners. Casey has developed a highly specialised engineering and DCP assessment teams that are working efficiently and effectively.

A broader approach to recruitment requires avenues for upskilling new recruits in the specifics of growth area planning.

CARDINIA

Cardinia has a dedicated Growth Area Planning team, comprising statutory and strategic planners. The Principal and Senior Statutory Planners lead management of the planning permit applications. The planners work closely with the Infrastructure Services department which comprises project engineers, traffic engineers, WSUD and waste management. During the plan assessments phase (FLPs, Engineering Plans), the project engineers take the lead.

All teams note that they are working over capacity and would benefit from additional resources. Officers note that while they consider they are well-skilled in growth area assessment, there are opportunities to further build their skills in relation to employment and activity centre planning.

Cardinia officers have observed that they struggle to recruit experienced planners and engineers due to distance and a general lack of graduate interest in growth area planning, and note that training a new recruit requires at least a six month investment. Officers have acknowledged that they have a key shortfall of traffic engineers and subdivision officers. Officers also note that they have previously, and with a high degree of success, supplemented their in-house recourses with external consultant assistance (for assessment of FLPs).

Cardinia are a small, yet effective team that would benefit from additional resources in key areas (traffic engineering, subdivisions), and upskilling in next generation aspects of growth area planning (employment and activity centres).

HUME

Hume has a dedicated growth area planning team comprising Statutory Planners and Subdivisions officers. This team works with Strategic Planners, Sustainable Environment and the Subdivisional Development Department (comprising Subdivision Engineers and Landscape Officers). For the scale of growth, Hume has a relatively small team of planners that lead application assessment - two senior planners, a planner and a coordinator. As such, planners have reported that they are at capacity to overcapacity.

The Hume assessment team has remained very stable across the organisation, comprising many long-term staff members with extensive council experience. While they have reported that they consider they have very effective skills in responding to growth area planning issues and understanding the construction process, they have acknowledged that they only have somewhat effective skills in project management and facilitation and negotiation.

Officers have acknowledged that they would benefit from additional resources, and in particular, resources that are able to add long-term value to the organisation. Value would be derived from skilled resources that bring fresh approaches to project management and development facilitation.

Hume are a small team that are stretched in terms of their ability to respond to the volume and pace of growth in the municipality. Officers would benefit from resources that model fresh approaches to project management and development facilitation.

MELTON

Melton has recognised that planning is a key component of a growth area Council and has been willing to invest in resourcing to support this. This included the creation of the Major Development Unit which is only a small Unit but is responsible for the issuing of growth area planning permit applications, as well as managing the permits through to the issue of Statement of Compliance. This Unit also manages development contributions, negotiations and the subdivision process.

Due to staff resourcing shortages in the Major Development Unit in the last couple of years, this has resulted in the planners being well over capacity in regard to workloads, however with a reasonably newly resourced team this has assisted in managing workloads. The Major Developments Unit is supported by a number of other Departments (eg engineering, urban design, landscape) who are generally well resourced to provide the technical support required.

Melton has a strong culture of investing in their staff through mentoring and training. This often creates further opportunities for employees, which has assisted with both staff retention and satisfaction, and built towards a positive working environment.

Generally well-resourced to manage the current growth. However, as the growth within Melton has the potential to increase and the Major Development Unit planners already at capacity, this may place additional pressure on existing resources, in particular, the Major Development Unit.

MITCHELL

Mitchell, by virtue of its historical context as a regional area, has a very small growth area planning team, primarily comprising a single statutory planner and an engineer.

However, as Mitchell is transitioning to a fully-fledged growth area council, they are investing in a team of strategic planners, urban designers and landscape architects to adopt a more holistic growth area planning approach (previous approaches have been recognised as ad hoc and lacking coordination). The statutory planning team (the front line of the assessment process), is currently planned to remain as a single person, who has reported to be operating greatly over capacity.

Being such a relatively new team, officers note that they would benefit from learning from the experience of more mature councils.

Mitchell officers have noted challenges with recruitment relate to geographic distance and inability to match metropolitan salaries.

Mitchell is poised to have a dramatic increase in the volume and complexity of growth area applications. While recent investments in the strategic planning and urban design will assist with a positive, proactive approach to planning, assistance is likely to be required at the front line of statutory planning and engineering.

WHITTLESEA

With a long legacy of growth area planning, over the years Whittlesea has developed a framework and internal structure to support growth. The recent organisation-wide structural change however, with Council no longer having a specific Planning Directorate, potentially challenges this collaboration and integration across Council with growth area planning roles now much more widely spread across the organisation.

While the statistics indicate Whittlesea is the best resourced growth area Council, it is acknowledged that many officers are at capacity, in particular planning officers with a key role in growth area planning permit applications.

Whilst Council is a strong advocate for investing in staff through mentoring and training, which has generally assisted in staff retention and job satisfaction, however it is acknowledged that there has been a high level of staff turnover recently.

Generally well-resourced to manage the current growth, however planning officers are currently at capacity.

WYNDHAM

Wyndham has developed a framework and internal structure to support growth, including the creation of a Growth Area Planning Unit that also includes subdivision.

While the statistics indicate that Wyndham is a well-resourced growth area Council, it is acknowledged that many officers are at capacity, in particular planning officers with a role in growth area planning permit applications.

Council is a strong advocate of investing in staff through mentoring and training which has assisted in staff retention and job satisfaction.

Generally well-resourced to manage the current growth, however planning officers are currently at capacity.

Technology

Benchmark according to types of technology used to assist Councils with process, efficiencies gain through technology etc.

WYNDHAM

+ SPEAR
+ File sharing software
+ Electronic lodgement for all applications

MELTON

+ **Authority** - database for application registration and tracking statutory days
+ **Dataworks**- Document generation
+ **SPEAR**
+ Microsoft Office
+ **Chameleon** - DCP management

HUME

+ In house spreadsheets for DCP's
+ Centralised, electronic referrals
+ TRIM
+ Office 365
+ Onedrive

MITCHELL

+ SPEAR
+ Microsoft Office

WHITTLESEA

+ **Authority** - database for application registration and tracking statutory days
+ Sharepoint
+ Trapeze
+ SPEAR - for minor subdivisions, CERT and SOC
+ Outlook

CASEY

+ Techone
+ Property and Rating inhouse lodgement portal

CARDINIA

+ Trapeze
+ HPRM: Content Manager
+ OpenOffice
+ SPEAR
+ Conquest - Asset Mana

Figure 21 Technology in use by each council

Technology

HUME

Recognise technology as a key weakness across the organisation - IT review at org level pending. All records are hard copy based. Use of SPEAR for conditions management.

CARDINIA

Adopted organisation-wide paperless office. Full electronic lodgement and permit process management + use of SPEAR. Some minor issues with hard copy lodgement by some applications.

MITCHELL

Hard copy based organisation. Planning team keen to implement paperless initiatives. Use of SPEAR for conditions management.

MELTON

In the process of improving technology resources including implementing on line lodgement. Opportunities for further enhancement of technology. Does not currently use SPEAR extensively.

WHITTLESEA

In the process of improving technology resources, including implementing on line lodgement for smaller apps. Good use of SPEAR to manage permit conditions. Opportunities for further technology enhancements.

WYNDHAM

Have used technology to improve processes and services including online lodgement and SPEAR for management of permit conditions. Room exists to continue to evolve technology improvements.

CASEY

Organisation-wide LEAN approach to work (paperless, flexible work arrangements). Some issues with integration of software requiring manual intervention. Use of SPEAR for condition management.

LIMITED USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

EXTENSIVE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

Figure 22 Technology Benchmark

PART 2.

Technology

CASEY

Casey has recently overhauled its approach to technology across the organisation – adopting a paperless approach, fully digital lodgement of applications (via the Casey Permit Lodgement Portal), use of SPEAR for certification and SOC processes, use on plans review tools (Trapeze).

Casey's technology shift has been seen as a broadly successful move, however, there have been some issues noted with gaps in the back-end integration of software (requiring manual intervention). These issues are being progressively addressed. Particular opportunities for improvement have been noted at the application lodgement and allocation phases (requiring further enhancements to the Casey Permit Lodgement Portal.

Casey is one of the most technologically progressive councils, however there are opportunities for further enhancement to achieve more complete integration and greater efficiencies.

CARDINIA

Cardinia have adopted a completely paperless office, and use a range of propriety and open IT tools to assist with records management, application lodgement, plan assessment and certification/SOC processes.

Officers consider that these tools generally operate relatively seamlessly. Areas for improvement relate to more strategic means of tracking, monitoring and project DCP/ICP projects and funds. Council have noted that they are currently reviewing their DCP processes as part of a separate *Streamlining for Growth* project which seeks to identify possible tools for in-house management and forward planning. One option has been to explore whether the current assets management software (Conquest) is able to be adapted for this purpose.

Cardinia is one of the most technologically progressive councils. However, are looking to adapt and expand their tools to enable for strategic management and forward planning of DCPs/ICPs and infrastructure sequencing.

HUME

Hume, as an organisation, primarily use a hard-copy based records and lodgement system (emailed applications must be printed). Applications are lodged in hardcopy (emailed applications must be printed). The need for hard copy records has been identified as a source of administrative delays, both in terms of allocation and internal referral management. Delays are also associated with minor tasks, such as sharing large files (Hume's IT system prevents many common file sharing technologies).

Recent improvements in software include adoption of Microsoft OneDrive, which allows for greater collaboration, and Hume makes use of the managed conditions function of SPEAR. While an online portal for application lodgement is available, it is not widely used by the growth areas team due to limitations in the software. In the past council has adopted propriety software for management of DCP (DevCap), however, has now shifted to use of internal spreadsheets etc, which are seen as more adaptable to the needs of officers and offers a more integrated method of tracking than DevCap did.

Hume acknowledge that technology is weakness, however, it must be addressed at the organisation level. Notwithstanding, there are opportunities for planners to be proactive about identifying a plan for digital improvements that can occur locally, or feed into the organisation-wide program of improvements.

MELTON

Technology to assist with planning processes is not something Melton has invested heavily in, and is identified as an overall as a weakness in their existing processes. Nevertheless, Melton is in the process of implementing technology to allow online lodgement of permit applications, which is a step to enhancing existing processes.

Melton is also one of the few councils that does not use the manage permit conditions function in Spear and therefore still reliant on many manual processes for the management of Certification and Statement of Compliance.

Melton has made some technology advances in the management of DCPs with a database established to manage and track development contributions. However, this tool is not being used to its maximum abilities nor does Council currently have technology available to manage Infrastructure Contribution Plans (ICPs)

Melton has a long way to go to become a sustainable and paperless office, with hard copy files, printing of most correspondence and plans being the norm for all applications.

The use of technology is a key weakness in Melton's existing processes. Significant opportunities exist to improve the use of digital technology in growth area planning processes.

Technology for the management of DCPs is established but not being used to its capabilities, further refinement also required to incorporate ICPs.

MITCHELL

Mitchell is not a 'high-tech' council. At an officer level there is a push for paperless submissions and assessment (the majority of applications are submitted by email), however, at an organisation level, hard copy records prevail. Key issues noted relate to 'doubling up' of tasks (printing emailed records) and trouble with large file sizes.

Officers see opportunities in reviewing their technology to identify opportunities for improvement. At present SPEAR is widely utilised during the certification and SOC phases of an application, and as such, may present opportunities for broader application (i.e. in terms of lodgement of applications, and management of communications).

Lack of advanced technology is not currently seen as major source of delays by council officers, however there is a desire to improve Mitchell's digital approach.

WHITTLESEA

Technology to assist with planning processes is not something Whittlesea have previously invested heavily in. However, Council has recognised this and is currently implementing on line lodgement for permit applications which is a step in the right direction to enhancing existing processes and improving the use of technology.

Whittlesea uses SPEAR well including the manage permit conditions function. Council has also established some good technology to manage DCP's which now requires further refinement to accommodate Infrastructure Contributions Plans (ICP).

Whittlesea still has a long way to go to become a sustainable and paperless office, with hard copy files, printing of most correspondence and plans being the norm for all applications.

Overall the use of technology is a weakness in Whittlesea's existing processes. Significant opportunities exist to improve the use of digital technology in growth area planning processes.

Technology for the management of DCPs is well established, now requires refinement to incorporate ICPs.

WYNDHAM

Wyndham have made some improvements to the use of technology to assist with planning in recent years. This has included the lodgement of planning permit applications and a general acceptance of email being used to send and receive correspondence with most correspondence emailed directly to the relevant planner as opposed to a centralised email address.

Wyndham does use SPEAR well including the manage permit conditions function.

Notwithstanding the above, Wyndham still has a way to go in improving the use of technology across their growth area functions.

While Wyndham have taken a number of steps to advance the use of technology in growth area planning, there are still opportunities to streamline the use of digital technology in growth area planning further.

PART 3.

ACTION PLANS

Overall	**82**
Casey	81
Cardinia	85
Hume	90
Melton	95
Mitchell	100
Whittlesea	106
Wyndham	113

PART 3.

Introduction

This Chapter provides a suite of recommendations in the form of action plans.

Actions are grouped under the key headings of this report:

- **Scale + Maturity**
- **Communication + Culture**
- **Process**
- **Resources**

It is important to consider that even though they may have been structured separately, sometimes the actions are linked and should be seen as part of a package. The objective of all the actions is to focus on areas of opportunity for improvement, weaknesses or to leverage existing positive practices.

Structure of the Action Plans

Eight action plans have been made, one for each of the seven growth area councils and one overall.

The purpose and intended audience of each of these is different.

OVERALL

These actions are generally relevant to all of the growth area councils and the projects often involve some form of collaboration to share strengths and learnings between the councils. Usually it is recommended that these actions be undertaken collectively, potentially lead by a centralised party. These projects are intended to support many of the individual actions recommended for each council.

COUNCIL SPECIFIC

These actions are written in response to the benchmarking and individual conditions that are occurring within each council. While some action may appear similar across multiple council, the description and rationale for each action has been individually tailored to respond to the specific observations for each council. It is intended that these actions will be undertaken independently, although there may be some scope for cross-collaboration and sharing of learnings between councils.

The action plans are structured as a table with the following sections:

ACTION

This column outlines the idea for each action – the 'what are we proposing'

OBJECTIVE

This column clarifies the intention of each action – the 'why is this important'

RATIONALE

This column provides the background as to why there's need for the action – the 'where is this coming from'

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

This column clarifies a successful outcome – the 'what does this look like'

STAKEHOLDERS

This column clarifies who is involved – the 'who'

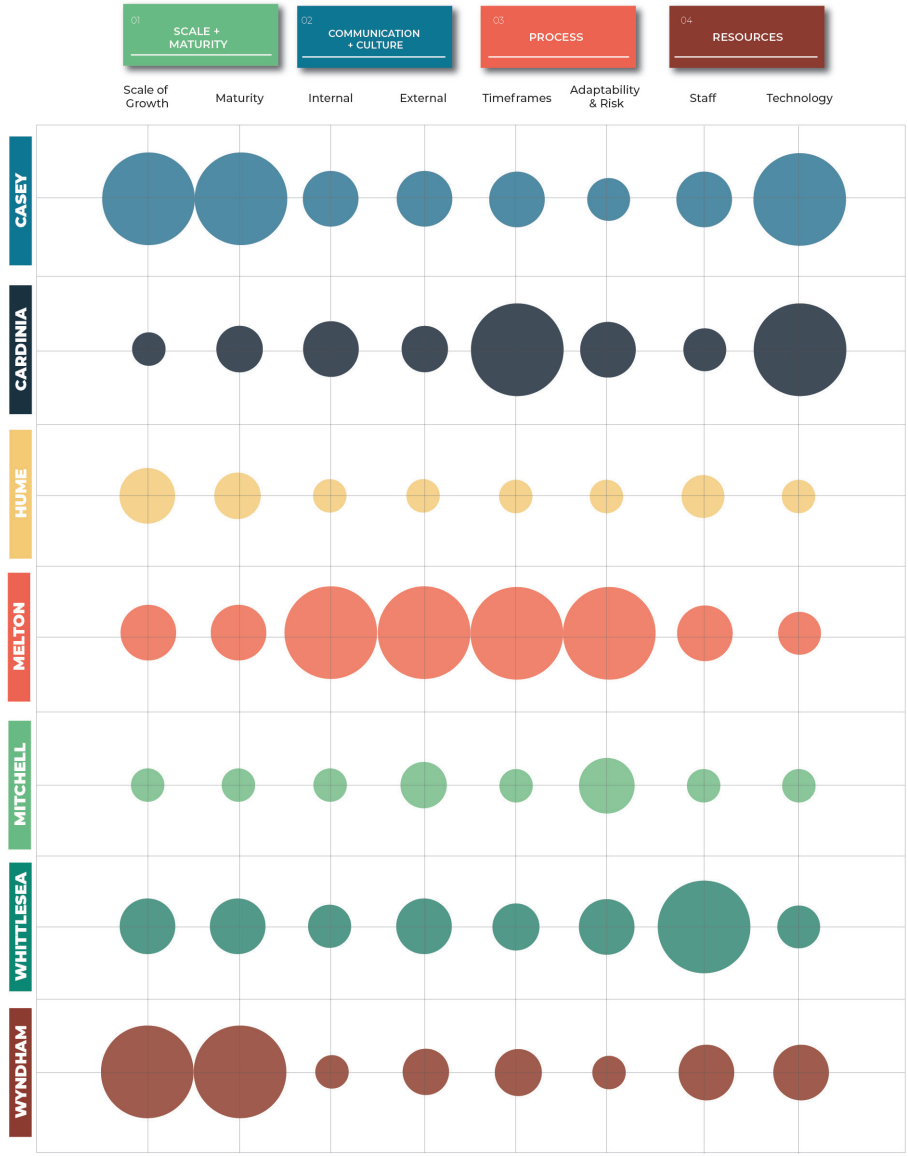
PROJECT LINKAGES

The column links the action to similar projects – the 'how can this be incorporated'

mesh

Snapshot of the Action plans chosen by Council

The action plans at Section 8 - 15 provide a snapshot of all the recommendations for each council. However, the following snapshot showcases two actions that have been chosen as a priority by the members of each council *themselves* in the workshop. They are across each of the four benchmarks as they reflect the different priorities of each Council at the moment.



Benchmark	Action	Primary measure of success
Casey		
Scale and Maturity	Risk Settings Review	Less 'surprises' for both council and the development industry
Communication and Culture	Internal Service Agreements	Reduced number of internal referrals and cycles
Cardinia		
Scale and Maturity	Brokered MOU's with Development Industry	Shortened decision timeframes
Process	Growth Area Standard Permit Conditions Review	Substantially reduced and refined list of permit conditions
Hume		
Communication and Culture	Internal Service Agreements	Increased clarity in the roles and responsibilities of internal referrals
Resources	Digital Improvement Plan	Reduced paper-based records
Melton		
Scale and Maturity	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program	Increased organisational understanding and agreement in growth area planning
Process	Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency	Shorter and more useful delegate reports
Mitchell		
Process	Plan Assessment Guidelines and Templates	Improved quality of the submissions and increase time frames
Resources	Additional Staff Resource	A new staff member in the growth area department
Whittlesea		
Communication and Culture	Internal Service Agreements	Reduced number of internal referrals and referral cycles
Process	Review of Administrative Processes.	Improved timeframes for administrative task
Wyndham		
Scale and Maturity	Case Manager Implementation Program	Clearer and more concise decision making
Communication and Culture	Internal Service Agreements	Reduce number of internal referrals and cycles

1 ACTION PLAN – OVERALL

Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
Scale + Maturity					
Shared Learnings Workshops + Forum Regular (e.g. quarterly, annual conference), facilitated workshops involving all growth area Councils and VPA to shared best-practice examples, learnings, and project feedback (including progress and findings on Streamlining for Growth Projects). Workshops to be hosted by Councils (rotating), and open to broad Council officer teams (including planning, engineering, subdivisions and other departments involved in growth area planning). The program should have an established governance structure, and a curated program should be co-designed by council officers.	• To provide a forum for regular sharing of ideas, processes and project outcomes • To give 'big picture' overview of VPA's Streamlining for Growth program • To enable Councils to learn from each other's experiences, proposed improvements and project. • To make the process of improving internal practices and procedures more transparent and open this to a wider audience	During the project it became apparent that VPA's Streamlining for Growth projects were relevant to the process improvements, however, the knowledge of these projects and their potential benefits were not widely known within Councils. Also, many Councils and VPA identified previous Shared Learnings workshops as beneficial, however, they felt that their benefit were limited by the limited number of staff exposed. Having Councils host the workshops would contribute to a sense of ownership, and may enable more officers (particularly from surrounding Councils) to attend.	Improved understanding of each other's approaches/projects. Adaption and adoption of a process improvement project/program by one or more Councils.	Growth Area Councils (consider including Geelong also). VPA	All Streamlining for Growth Programs Council's internal process improvement programs. Casey Knowledge Program National Growth Areas Alliance + Interface Councils' programs
Growth Areas Mentoring Program Develop a formalised mentoring program managed by a centralised agency/body, to match officers from more mature Councils with those is emerging growth area Councils. Potential to also include council officer/developer/consultant mentor matches Program should provide for formalised opportunities for skill sharing, capacity building and general mentoring on a one-on-one basis, but also opportunities for collective learning and achievement recognition across the program.	• To provide a formalised structure within which specialised growth area skills and expertise can be shared from more mature to emerging growth area Councils. • To provide a platform for cross-fertilisation of process improvement ideas at the individual officer level. • To foster a sense of continuous improvement embedded within councils at the officer level (rather than being imposed by management). • To enable skilled council officers to gain recognition and exposure within the industry for their achievements. • To develop a shared understanding between councils and the development industry	Several of the more mature Councils (such as Casey) identified that they have developed a set of specialised expertise in key areas, such as DCP management, project management, negotiation etc, and they are willing to share these skills more broadly. The emerging Councils see value in learning from their more experienced peers. The more mature Councils see value in upskilling across the industry, and also providing a pathway for skilled senior officers to have greater exposure and recognition in the industry.	Increased growth area planning skills of officers in emerging councils. Increased confidence and respect in the industry of council officers from mature growth areas. Greater empathy between the development industry and council.	Growth Area Councils	

Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
Communication + Culture					
Greenfield Development Training Develop program to provide training for Council officers about the process of greenfield development from a developer's perspective. Training should be designed and lead by genuine practitioners in the development industry, and give an understanding of development processes, priorities and demands, including an overview of project financing, development agreements, and development processes. UDIA offers project delivery training that could be adapted for this purpose (potentially with subsidy for Council officers). It is recommended that the program offer practical, real world examples, and opportunities for interactivity.	• To ensure Council officers understand the key aspects that drive greenfield development from a developer's perspective.	Most Councils rated their knowledge of commercial development processes and priorities as their least developed skill. Many comments were made during interviews that there was a misalignment of priorities and understanding between Council officers and developers. This program seeks to provide real word exposure of Council officers to the demands of the development industry.	Improved understanding of development industry processes and demands. All Principal Planners (or equivalent role) having attended training.	Growth Area Councils UDIA	**Shared Learnings Workshops + Forum**
Growth Areas Forum - Council, VPA and development industry Establish a regular growth areas forum between growth area Councils, VPA and industry (developers, consultants and industry bodies) to open a genuine dialogue about aligning planning and development objectives, processes and outcomes. The forums should not focus on specific project or implementation issues, but should rather seek to find common understanding about how processes and relationships can be improved to achieve shared objectives.	• To improve openness and transparency between local government and the development industry • To foster a sense of shared responsibility and understanding with regard to growth area development • To build alignment of expectations between local government and the development industry regarding	A key theme during the project was a sense of misalignment between the expectations and objectives of the development industry, and those of local government. While each come to the assessment process with different perspectives, there are some shared objectives sought. A recent forum held by UDIA with Mitchell Shire has been well-received by all parties, and may be an appropriate model for future forums.		Growth Area Councils VPA Developers Consultants Industry bodies (UDIA, Property Council Australia etc)	UDIA (currently considering local government membership to committees)

Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
Negotiation for Opportunities Training Develop a training program that workshops and builds skills in genuine negotiation, with a focus on recognising and developing new opportunities and innovations. Training should be tailored to the particular set of challenges presented by growth area planning, and identify strategies for negotiating outcomes that moves beyond a 'checklist' approach to meeting standard. Training should include: • Common purpose – what is outcome sought • Stakeholder management • Problem solving • Recognising and developing opportunities	• To improve the negotiation skills of Council planners. • To enable genuine negotiation to occur in a manner that leads to improved outcomes. • To provide a climate for innovation and continuous improvements to be supported.	The most successful outcomes are often achieved when there is genuine negotiation – requiring compromise on both sides. While all agreed negotiation skills are critical to growth area planning, there appeared to be little room for genuine compromise in order to achieve potentially innovative outcomes. . The review process noted that many councils, including the more mature ones, have moved to a 'checklist' approach to meeting standards, that leave little room for alternative ways of achieving outcomes (i.e. where a variation to a standard would be required).	Increased number of innovative development projects, which may challenge standards, but which are considered 'good' outcomes.	Growth Area Councils VPA Developers Consultants Industry bodies (UDIA, Property Council Australia etc)	

Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
Processes					
UGZ Audit Audit, review and update of all Urban Growth Zone Schedules to reflect current best-practice and remove redundant controls and requirements. The audit should consider: • the complexity and level of prescription • opportunities to enhance flexibility • permit triggers, referral requirements, specific objectives of the PSP areas • ongoing operation of notice requirements • opportunities to exempt Clause 56 • anomalies and greater consistency between the provisions of the schedules	• To provide greater clarity and consistency of requirements across all growth areas.	Most Councils noted that the UGZs often contain inconsistent or outdated requirements, and can frustrate and complicate the process. UGZs have improved considerably over the years, however, older UGZs have not been subject to an update or review.	Revised UGZs implemented in Planning Schemes.	Growth Area Councils VPA Developers Consultants Industry bodies (UDIA, Property Council Australia etc)	
Conditions Management Tool Develop a consistent 'project management-style' tool to manage planning permit conditions and improve clarity with regard to timing and responsibility. The tool should articulate clearly triggers for conditions compliance, type of information required to comply with condition, and who in Council will be responsible for reviewing and or/approving submitted documentation. The tool should be flexible enough to work with each Council's processes, and sit outside, but complement, the formal 'permit document' framework.	• To increase transparency and accountability with regard to permit condition management.	Many Councils noted that there was often confusion at Certification and SOC time regarding which permit conditions are triggered, who is responsible for 'signing off' on which conditions etc, leading to delays. While SPEAR was nominated as a potential tool for addressing these concerns (subject to improved awareness and training), a more transparent tool, that is circulated with a permit may be more valuable.	Fewer enquiries of Council regarding conditions requirements and requesting updates		VPA Standard Permit Conditions Review
VCAT Plan Approvals List Investigate, in partnership with VCAT, whether there is an opportunity for a 'fast tracked' list to hear matters regarding post-permit plan approvals.	• To provide an avenue for efficient dispute resolution following issue of the permit.				

Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
Resources					
Specialised Growth Area SPEAR Training Develop a tailored program of training for users of SPEAR for large-scale multi lot subdivisions. This training should specifically have regard to the key challenges that are seen as barriers to ongoing use of SPEAR for large scale subdivisions (with potential for feedback loop to DELWP to provide basis for further improvements to SPEAR system and usability).	• To increase the understanding and use of SPEAR's full capabilities for multi-lot subdivisions • To increase use of SPEAR by the development community for large-scale applications • To enable SPEAR to be used more effectively as a lodgement and tracking tool for those Councils that do not currently have proprietary systems in place (e.g. Hume, Wyndham, Mitchell, Melton, Whittlesea[1])	During the interviews, many comments were made that SPEAR should 'in theory' be capable of providing a powerful means of tracking applications. While the system is well utilised for small scale subdivisions, it is not well utilised for large multi-lot subdivisions due to lack of understanding of the full capabilities of the system, and the cumbersome nature of its useability.	Increased use of SPEAR for lodgement of multi-lot applications. Reduced number of phone and email enquiries to	DELWP Council officers Consultants	Streamlining for Growth SPEAR project (managed by Wyndham City Council)
Outer Metropolitan Area Graduate Program Develop a formalised graduate program (1-2 years) managed by a centralised agency/body (in partnership with universities) to encourage recent graduates to work across a number of Councils within their local area, of which a growth area council would be included. The program would be targeted at local graduates within a set region to encourage graduates to work locally, but to also consider growth area planning/engineering (or other complementary professions) as a career path.	• To improve the perception of growth area planning (and other complementary professions) within the industry. • To provide career pathways to growth area planning, while also providing for upskilling in other aspects of planning.	Difficulty recruiting staff was recognised across all councils as a key barrier to delivering improved performance. Barriers to recruitment included geographic distance of growth area councils and poor perception of growth area planning amongst young planners. It was also acknowledged that growth are planning, while building on core planning skills, requires another set of specialised skills that requires training and development.	Increase in number of graduate planners looking to growth area planning as a career pathway. Less training required of graduate planners	Growth Area Councils Universities	
Centralised Urban Design and Project Facilitation Advice Resource Provide a centralised resource that is available to provide specialised urban design advice and/or project facilitation advice on a 'on call' basis.	• To ensure that good design outcomes are given a 'voice' in the assessment process • To enable innovation and non-standard design outcomes to be critically evaluated and facilitated where appropriate.				

[1] We note Whittlesea has recently developed an online permit lodgement and tracking tool, however, this is not currently available for large-scale growth area subdivision applications due to systems limitations.

2 ACTION PLAN – CASEY

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
Scale + Maturity						
	Risk Settings Review Undertake a review of Council's current 'risk settings' in the context of growth area planning and delivery decision-making. The review should seek to find an appropriate balance where council does not 'sweat the small' stuff', but instead focuses time and energy on substantive issues that generate positive outcomes. This project will influence and be influenced by other recommended projects, including Internal Service Agreements and Standard Conditions Review.	• To recalibrate Council's risk settings to encourage greater diversity and innovation in growth area outcomes • To ensure that the right information is required at the right time. • To ensure requirements asked of developers are not unnecessarily onerous and results in a proportionate benefit (to the community or process).	Casey, as a mature Council, has identified that while they have in place many beneficial policies and procedures to guide growth area planning, in some cases, a low tolerance for risk is frustrating the process (particularly internal referral processes) without a commensurate increase in benefit to the project, community or process. This is also a key recommendation of Council's Planning Services Review 2018.	Faster, more efficient decisions, that do not compromise acceptable outcomes for Council and the community. Less 'surprises' Sharing of risk ownership	Council officers Developers Consultants External state agencies (VicRoads, MW, SEW, SP AusNet, et) Legal / risk management	Casey Planning Services Review Implementation Program C1 Program Casey knowledge program MOU / PGG VPA certification project
Communication + Culture						
	Internal Service Agreements Review internal service agreements, with a particular focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities, confirm procedures and timeframes/targets. Service agreements should seek to minimise common referrals that can be readily assessed against guidelines/use standard conditions, and reinforce 'one bite at the cherry' style of assessment. The role of internal departments in provision of pre-application should also be formalised.	• To minimise time applications, spend being considered by referral departments within Council. • To clarify the remit of internal referrals to minimise extraneous requirements and obligations of permit applications. • To clarify 'advisory' versus 'decision-making' roles across the assessment and delivery process.	Casey has noted that there is opportunity to clarify the roles and responsibilities of internal referral departments, which has created delays. Casey see an opportunity for internal referrals to be more targeted, and that with a reduced number of referrals, there are greater commitments to timeframes and to more comprehensive and pro-active assessments on the first referral – minimising the need for further referrals.	Reduced number of internal referrals Reduced number of referral cycles. Improved decision-making timeframes Improved and targeted engagement with internal departments.	Council officers (including internal referral departments).	

Process					
Growth Area Standard Permit Conditions Review Review of standard conditions used for growth area permits. The review should have careful regard to the justification for imposing each condition, the timing trigger, the level of information required to comply with the condition, and which internal department is responsible for providing advice and/or sign off. It is recommended that the template for standard conditions include a brief justification for each condition (refer to South Australia permit format). As permit conditions adapt and change, so should the justification – providing a clear record of the rationale for changes. This project links directly with the Casey Risk Settings Review (are all conditions necessary?), and the general Conditions Management Tool project.	• To ensure that all conditions imposed on permits are justified (by policy, the Act etc), relevant, useful and are not unnecessarily onerous. • To enable all parties (Council officers, internal referrals, developers, consultants etc) to understand the rationale and information requirements for each condition. • To provide a • To provide clarity about who in Council is responsible for advising on or approving information submitted under permit conditions.	Most Council's acknowledged that the growth in number of permit conditions has not necessarily resulted in commensurate improvement in development outcomes. It was also acknowledged that some conditions are imposed purely in order to avoid risk (often by internal referral departments, without supporting policy), and there is a lack of clarity about what is required to comply with the condition, or who is able to provide 'sign off'. While VPA are currently reviewing the general conditions, it is understood this project is related more to construction of clear permit conditions rather than a detailed 'audit' and justification for each condition.	Substantially reduced and refined list of permit conditions. Reduced time spent approving information requested by permit conditions.	Council officers (including internal referral departments). Development industry	VPA Standard Planning Permit Condition Review Casey Risk Settings Review Conditions Management Tool Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency.
Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency Review Delegate Report template (and other related reporting templates) to encourage 'reporting by exception' – matters that genuinely contribute to the turn of a decision, rather than standardised content. This review should also include a brief review of Council's previous approach to recording its decision making. Any notable trends should be recorded and recommendations should be provided for improvements. Consider removing submission and assessment requirements for State matters that have been addressed as the PSP level (e.g. State Policy and Clause 56), and creating a range of PSP specific templates that minimise repetitive effort.	• To encourage more emphasis on matters that influence decisions • To minimise time and effort spent on preparation of delegate reports. • To provide greater transparency to the development industry about Council's decision making. • To provide a clear record of Council's decision-making trends.	Casey is already in the process of reviewing and tightening up their report templates. However, it has been acknowledged that an external review would be beneficial, accompanied by upskilling in report writing that is meaningful, and provides a clear rationale for the decisions being taken. In Casey's case, the Principal planner is empowered to make decisions, and the delegate report is an important tool for recording and justifying these decisions.	Improved decision-making timeframes A report that 'writes itself (almost)	Council officers Development industry	VPA Generally in Accordance with Project

The review should be complemented by in-house training on effective report writing. This project complements VPA's Generally in Accordance with project.

It is recommended that reports are circulated with the approved Planning Permit, to provide greater transparency about Council's decision making.

Preapplication Process Review

Formalise the pre-app process in a short- written document that is distributed internally and to the development industry. The document should make it clear what the expectations are for a pre-app and articulate a set of commitments about what type of advice can and will be provided.

In order for pre-apps to remain useful, it will be important for meaningful advice to be given. As such, this project will rely on the outcomes of 'Risk Settings Review project.

- To align industry and Council expectations with regard to pre-application meetings
- To provide a clear framework for types of advice that will be offered.
- To ensure that pre-application meetings remain beneficial and offer meaningful advice to development proponents.

At present Casey has a process for preapplication meetings that appears to work well. However, the key issues (from interviews and industry feedback) is that the pre-app process lacks substance as developers and Council are seeking to achieve different objectives (Council offers fairly general advice about process etc, proponents are seeking detailed feedback and commitments on non-standard matters).

Council officers

Developers

Consultants

Risk Settings Review

Internal Service Agreements

Resources

	Collaborative outcomes Group A process and group of people that can act as a resource for Principal Planners to call on expert opinions or to guide decision making on complex matters to achieve the best outcome. This project complements the Negotiation Skills Training project, as it is necessary for planners to understand what they can and can't compromise to effectively negotiate with the development industry.	• To provide a formal structure where Principal Planners can access expertise to enable them to make decisions on complex matters without the need for additional internal referral cycles.	Casey has empowered their Principal Planners to make binding decisions on behalf of Council. However, the complexity of issues has meant that Principal Planners often feel they do not have the necessary expertise to take decisions on certain matters, resulting in additional internal referral cycles.	Faster decisions Less disputes from development industry regarding	Council officers	Negotiation Skills Training
	Enhancements to Casey Permit Lodgement Portal Undertake improvements to Casey's propriety Permit Lodgement software to integrate the system with other Casey software and processes, to avoid delays associated with manual intervention.	• To improve integration of the Permit Lodgement Portal with other in-house software and systems. • To achieve time savings where applications are waiting on manual intervention (such as at application allocation)	During the interview it was noted that there are opportunities to further enhance and streamline processes within the online lodgement portal (at present some processes remain manual, or do not integrate seamlessly with other systems).	Time savings from lodgement to allocation (and other blockages in the system)	Council officers Software developers	

3 ACTION PLAN - CARDINIA

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Scale and Maturity					
	Brokered MOUs with Development Industry Develop a set of MOUs with key landholders in new PSP areas, with the MOUs to enable provision of a 'fee for service' model, with dedicated resources to applications, commitments to timeframes, and opportunities for innovation and different approaches to common standards. The agreements should be the result of a facilitated consultative approach between Council and the developer, to determine an agreed vision for the project and set of commitments. Development of an MOU approach should first involve engagement with the local development industry, and review of the lessons learned from other councils (Casey and Wyndham).	• To develop a Council developer shared vision for specific projects, to provide a framework for innovation and improved on the ground outcomes (which may challenge conventional standards) • To enable Council to provide and meet commitments regarding timeframes based on funding for additional resources.	Cardinia currently works with two key developers (plus a number of fragmented developers). With new PSPs approved, there is an opportunity for Cardinia to adopt an MOU approach (similar to Casey and Wyndham) as a means of securing additional resources, and achieving improved outcomes.	Faster approval timeframes for MOU projects. Better on the ground outcomes as a result of focus on innovation. Less resistance from the development partners to Council requirements (provided commitments are achieved)	Council officers Development industry VPA	Casey and Wyndham MOU projects/pilots
	Local Industry Forums + Info Sessions Develop a set of local industry forums targeted at small scale consultants and developers who work in the area. The forums should be interactive, and focus on increasing the awareness of consultants and developers of Council's requirements, their services, and the existing suite of templates and information available to assist them.	• To provide local consultants and developers (particularly those of a smaller scale) with information on Council process, requirements and services.	Cardinia noted that many of their local consultants are not as familiar with growth area planning processes, and as such, much time is spent 'coaching' these consultants and smaller developers on what they need to do.	Fewer occasions where Council officers are required to 'coach' consultants and developers on application process and requirements.	Council officers Local development industry (small scale developers and consultants)	

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Internal Service Agreements Review internal service agreements, with a particular focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities, confirm procedures and timeframes/targets. Service agreements should seek to minimise common referrals that can be readily assessed against guidelines/use standard conditions, and reinforce 'one bite at the cherry' style of assessment. The role of internal departments in provision of pre-application should also be formalised.	• To minimise time applications, spend being considered by referral departments within Council. • To clarify the remit of internal referrals to minimise extraneous requirements and obligations of permit applications. • To clarify 'advisory' versus 'decision-making' roles across the assessment and delivery process.	Cardinia has noted that there is opportunity to clarify the roles and responsibilities of internal referral departments, which has created delays. There is an opportunity to ensure internal referrals are more targeted, and that with a reduced number of referrals, there are greater commitments to timeframes and to more comprehensive and pro-active assessments on the first referral – minimising the need for further referrals.	Reduced number of internal referrals Reduced number of referral cycles Increased developer satisfaction	Council officers (including internal referral departments).	Cardinia E-portal project

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Process					
	Growth Area Standard Permit Conditions Review Review of standard conditions used for growth area permits. The review should have careful regard to the justification for imposing each condition, the timing trigger, the level of information required to comply with the condition, and which internal department is responsible for providing advice and/or sign off. It is recommended that the template for standard conditions include a brief justification for each condition (refer to South Australia permit format). As permit conditions adapt and change, so should the justification – providing a clear record of the rationale for changes.	• To ensure that all conditions imposed on permits are justified (by policy, the Act etc), relevant, useful and are not unnecessarily onerous. • To enable all parties (Council officers, internal referrals, developers, consultants etc) to understand the rationale and information requirements for each condition. • To provide clarity about who in Council is responsible for advising on or approving information submitted under permit conditions.	Most Council's acknowledged that the growth in number of permit conditions has not necessarily resulted in commensurate improvement in development outcomes. It was also acknowledged that some conditions are imposed purely in order to avoid risk (often by internal referral departments, without supporting policy), and there is a lack of clarity about what is required to comply with the condition, or who is able to provide 'sign off'. While VPA are currently reviewing the general conditions, it is understood this project is related more to construction of clear permit conditions rather than a detailed 'audit' and justification for each condition.	Substantially reduced and refined list of permit conditions. Reduced time spent approving information requested by permit conditions. Increased developer satisfaction	Council officers (including internal referral departments). Development industry	VPA Standard Planning Permit Condition Review Casey Risk Settings Review Conditions Management Tool Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency
	Preapplication Process Review Formalise the pre-app process in a short- written document that is distributed internally and to the development industry. The document should make it clear what the expectations are for a pre-app and articulate a set of commitments about what type of advice can and will be provided. In order for pre-apps to remain useful, it will be important for meaningful advice to be given. The review should identify recommendations and opportunities for where Cardinia can provide more guidance within a pre-app setting, as opposed to current practice of only providing guidance on process matters.	• To align industry and Council expectations with regard to pre-application meetings • To provide a clear framework for types of advice that will be offered. • To ensure that pre-application meetings remain beneficial and offer meaningful advice to development proponents.	At present Cardinia has a process for preapplication meetings that appears to work well from Council's perspective. Council see pre-apps as a means of setting the application of the right path process-wise, but not a forum for providing guidance on the substance of the application. However, the key issues (from interviews and industry feedback) is that the pre-app process lacks substance as developers and Council are seeking to achieve different objectives (Council offers fairly general advice about process etc, proponents are seeking detailed feedback and commitments on non-standard matters).	Fewer issues raised/information sought during the further information phase	Council officers Developers Consultants	Risk Settings Review Internal Service Agreements

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Review of Statement of Compliance (SOC) processes Improve processes relating to SOC including matters that fall out of the SOC process or occur post-SOC (e.g. return of bonds).This may include development of a bond tracking tool and Section 173 tracking tool.	• To ensure there are detailed processes and procedures in place both prior and post the issue of Statement of Compliance • To ensure the SOC process runs effectively and efficiently.	The industry feedback noted there was room for improvement in the SOC process. These issues mainly relate to bonds and potentially the ongoing implementation of Section 173 Agreements.	Bonds collected, tracked and returned in a timely manner. Compliance audit of Section 173 Agreements.	Council officers Development industry	

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Resources					
	Development contribution management tool – expansion of existing project Improve existing technology or develop new technology to effectively manage DCPs and respond to the recent introduction of Infrastructure Contribution Plans. The system should provide efficiency in calculating contributions payable and credits applicable to landowners/developers, to streamline and fast-track landowner/developer meeting relevant permit conditions and achieving compliance in the planning process.	• To ensure Council has the appropriate technology available to satisfactorily manage Development Contributions Plans and negotiate infrastructure agreements • To ensure the system can accommodate the new Infrastructure Contributions Plans.	Cardinia is currently reviewing its DCPs systems and processes (a Streamlining for Growth project), and has previously conducted an internal audit. This has revealed that a DCP tool that links to the asset database (Conquest) and GIS system would be most appropriate (see Development sequencing tool).	Ability to be able to manage and track funds related to Infrastructure Contribution Plans.	Council Officers	Infrastructure Sequencing Tool
	Infrastructure sequencing tool Develop an infrastructure sequencing tool that provides a spatial presentation of the anticipated sequence and timing of infrastructure projects	• To enable more strategic decision-making where development will likely trigger or generate a need for new development. • Assist with the assessment of Public Infrastructure Plan regarding infrastructure requirement and timing of provision; • Fast-track the negotiation process for works in-kind agreements; • Assist internal service teams for planning and prioritising recreation and community facilities delivery programs.	One of the challenges faced by Councils is to understand, plan and prioritise infrastructure provisions when building new communities in the greenfield growth areas. Councils have identified that an infrastructure sequencing tool that provides a spatial presentation of the anticipated sequence and timing of infrastructure projects will assist with more efficient and strategic decision-making.	Ability to make more informed decisions due to a better understanding of infrastructure requirements.	Council Officers	Development contribution management tool
	Traffic Engineer Resource Funding for dedicated growth area traffic engineering assistance.	• To improve the level of traffic engineering advice provided in relation to growth area planning permits.	Council has identified that traffic engineering is a key area where resources are stretched, creating a bottleneck in the process.	Improved traffic advice Faster internal referrals from engineering	Council officers	

4 ACTION PLAN – HUME

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Scale + Maturity					
	Brokered MOUs with Development Industry Develop a set of MOUs with key landholders in new PSP areas, with the MOUs to enable provision of dedicated resources to applications, commitments to timeframes, and opportunities for innovation and different approaches to common standards. The agreements should be the result of a facilitated consultative approach between Council and the developer, to determine an agreed vision for the project and set of commitments. The MOUs will be brokered by an independent facilitator. Funding of resources is not necessarily required to be provided by developers – the brokered MOU process should determine the most appropriate way to manage a project by both the developer and council.	• To develop a Council developer shared vision for specific projects, to provide a framework for innovation and improved on the ground outcomes (which may challenge conventional standards) • To enable Council to provide and meet commitments regarding timeframes based on funding for additional resources.	With new PSPs about to be approved, there is an opportunity for Hume to adopt an MOU approach (similar to Casey and Wyndham) as a means of securing additional resources, and achieving improved outcomes.	Faster approval timeframes for MOU projects. Better on the ground outcomes as a result of focus on innovation. Less resistance from the development partners to Council requirements (provided commitments are achieved) Improved relationships with development partners	Council officers Development industry	Casey and Wyndham MOU projects/pilots #Humeplan (process improvements)
	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program Undertake a facilitated program that seeks to foster cross-departmental understanding within Council, and to development a council-wide vision with regard to integrated growth area implementation and delivery. The focus of this Program will be to foster cultural change, and engender a sense of enthusiasm for continuous improvement. This program will be used as the basis for other key programs and processes within Council (such as internal service level agreements, communication protocols etc). Most critically, it will be the program that sets the parameters for officer's ability to negotiate on behalf of Council. It will set the non-negotiables and the negotiables, and as such, is complemented by the Negotiation Skills Training Project.	• To enable Council to 'take stock' of where they are as a growth area Council and what their vision is for the future. • To generate a sense of shared ownership across Council of objectives relating to growth area planning (particularly for those internal departments whose core business is not related to growth area planning). • To empower Council Officers in the decision making process to make informed decisions in a swift and timely manner on behalf of Council.	Process reviews are underway comprising a number of projects. Formalising agreement of Council's vision and objectives for growth area planning will set a strong foundation for the service review, and other projects recommended in this action plan. A program that can deliver an integrated growth area implementation and delivery vision will assist in officers having the confidence and ability to make informed decisions in a timely manner on behalf of Council and potentially reduce the number of internal referrals and meetings required.	Improved perception of growth area planning within Council.	Council officers (across all departments that are involved in growth area planning) Facilitator	Negotiation Skills Project Growth Area Induction Program Communication Protocol Internal Service Agreements Workflow Procedures and Targets Hume's Customer Journey Mapping

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Communication + Culture					
	Growth Area Induction Program Develop an induction process for new employees, that reiterates the vision developed in the program above and provides an introduction to Council's processes and procedures.	• To ensure new officers are inducted into the 'Hume Way' (informed by the Vision Program) from the beginning of their employment.	This project will help ensure that the outcomes of the Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program and associated projects are transmitted to new employees.		Council officers	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program Communication Protocol Internal Service Agreements Workflow Procedures and Targets
	Communication Protocol Develop a communication protocol for dealing with internal and external stakeholders, including targets and monitoring mechanisms for responding to enquiries.	• To improve the dialogue between Council officers and the development industry.	A key opportunity for improvement for Hume related to their communication with the development industry. Officers are often uncontactable, creating frustration in the industry.	Faster response times to enquiries	Council officers Development Industry.	Workflow Procedures and Targets
	Internal Service Agreements Review internal service agreements, with a particular focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities, confirm procedures and timeframes/targets. Service agreements should seek to minimise common referrals that can be readily assessed against guidelines/use standard conditions, and reinforce 'one bite at the cherry' style of assessment. The role of internal departments in provision of pre-application should also be formalised.	• To minimise time applications, spend being considered by referral departments within Council. • To clarify the remit of internal referrals to minimise extraneous requirements and obligations of permit applications. • To clarify 'advisory' versus 'decision-making' roles across the assessment and delivery process. • To empower statutory planning	Hume has noted that there is a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of internal referral departments, which has created delays. Hume see an opportunity for internal referrals to be more targeted, and that with a reduced number of referrals, there are greater commitments to timeframes and to more comprehensive and pro-active assessments on the first referral – minimising the need for further referrals.	Reduced number of internal referrals Reduced number of referral cycles.	Council officers (including internal referral departments).	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program Communication Protocol Workflow Procedures and Targets

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Local Industry Forums + Info Sessions Develop a set of local industry forums targeted at small scale consultants and developers who work in the area. The forums should be interactive, and focus on increasing the awareness of consultants and developers of Council's requirements, their services, and the existing suite of templates and information available to assist them.	• To provide local consultants and developers operating within Hume with information on Council process, requirements and services.	In order to make best use of council resources, these forums are aimed at avoiding the need for council officer to spend time 'coaching' consultants and developers on local requirements and approaches. The forums will also assist in building an open and transparent relationship between council and the development industry.	Fewer occasions where Council officers are required to 'coach' consultants and developers on application process and requirements. Improved relationships with the development industry.	Council officers Local development industry (small scale developers and consultants)	

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
Process						
	Work flow procedures + targets Review, clarify and document workflow procedures for key planning and assessment process, and set target timeframes. This project should have regard to the outcomes of the Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program.	• To document and formalise existing and proposed policies and procedures.	Hume has acknowledged that they have many practices, but they tend to not be well documented, and there is a lack of clarity about them.	Improved timeframes	Council officers	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program.
	Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency Review Delegate Report template (and other related reporting templates) to encourage 'reporting by exception' – matters that genuinely contribute to the turn of a decision, rather than standardised content. This review should also include a brief review of Council's previous approach to recording its decision making. Any notable trends should be recorded, and recommendations should be provided for improvements. Consider removing submission and assessment requirements for State matters that have been addressed as the PSP level (e.g. State Policy and Clause 56), and creating a range of PSP specific templates that minimise repetitive effort. The review should be complemented by in-house training on effective report writing. This project complements VPA's Generally in Accordance with project.	• To encourage more emphasis on matters that influence decisions • To minimise time and effort spent on preparation of delegate reports. • To provide greater transparency to the development industry about Council's decision making. • To provide a clear record of Council's decision-making trends.	A Delegate Report template for each PSP area will significantly reduce officer time in preparing a delegate report. The template will also be able to capture all relevant information to a specific PSP and ensure that a consistent assessment across each permit application in the relevant PSP area is being undertaken.	Improved decision-making timeframes	Council officers Development industry	VPA Generally in Accordance with Project
	Preapplication Process Review Formalise the pre-app process in a short- written document that is distributed internally and to the development industry. The document should make it clear what the expectations are for a pre-app and articulate a set of commitments about what type of advice can and will be provided. In order for pre-apps to remain useful, it will be important for meaningful advice to be given. As such, this project will rely on the outcomes of 'Risk Settings Review project.	• To align industry and Council expectations with regard to pre-application meetings • To provide a clear framework for types of advice that will be offered. To ensure that pre-application meetings remain beneficial and offer meaningful advice to development proponents.	At present Hume has a process for preapplication meetings that appears to work well from Council's perspective. However, the key issues (from interviews and industry feedback) is that the pre-app process lacks substance as developers and Council are seeking to achieve different objectives (Council offers fairly general advice about process etc, proponents are seeking detailed feedback and commitments on non-standard matters).		Council officers Developers Consultants	Internal Service Agreements

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Construction Plans Process Review Review the construction plans assessment process, including timeframes, use of FLPs, when construction plans can be reviewed, use of EDCM/IDM/Council standards. The review should provide recommendations with regard to improving the standard of plans submissions, and ways to reduce number of resubmissions required.	• To adopt a more facilitative approach to review of construction plans that have regard to development programs. • To provide more consistency of expectations – that aligns more closely with other growth area councils.	Hume Council is an outlier in terms of not requiring FLPs (it is optional) prior to construction plans, having localised variations to the EDCM and refusing to commence review of construction plans until a Plan of Subdivision has been certified (these are often help up for reasons that don't impact on the construction plans).	Reduce timeframes for approval of construction plans (including reduced resubmissions). Documenting timeliness to gauge measure of success. Improved quality of plans submitted.	Council officers Developers Consultants	Internal Service Agreements Resourcing

5 ACTION PLAN – MELTON

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Scale + Maturity					
	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program Undertake a facilitated program that seeks to foster cross-departmental understanding within Council, and to develop a council-wide vision with regard to integrated growth area implementation and delivery taking into account the recently new leadership and team within the Major Developments Unit. This program can be used as the basis for other key programs and processes within Council. The focus of this program will be allow the re-establishing Major Development unit to set their future priorities and to develop a framework that empowers Council officers to make informed decisions in a swift and timely manner on behalf of Council. The program should provide Officers with the required certainty of a 'Council position' without the need for extensive internal review and comment.	• To generate a sense of shared ownership across Council of objectives relating to growth area planning. • To empower Council Officers in the decision making process to make informed decisions in a swift and timely manner on behalf of Council. • To provide the Major Developments Unit with the opportunity to identify their next generation of priorities.	Council has strong internal relationships currently in place, however with the Major Developments team having reasonably new leadership and many new team members there is room to regroup and formalise the cross-departmental growth area planning understanding within Council. A program that can deliver an integrated growth area implementation and delivery vision will assist in officers having the confidence and ability to make informed decisions in a timely manner on behalf of Council and potentially reduce the number of internal referrals and meetings required.	Reduction in the number of internal referrals required. Improved timeframes in the decision-making process and resolving issues. Organisational understanding an agreement in growth area planning process. Major dev. team clarity about role and authority.	Council officers	Internal Service Agreements

Communication + Culture

Development Industry Forums & Newsletters Reinstate the developer forums and regular newsletters that were previously successfully implemented by Council prior to change of leadership and staff turnover in the Major Developments Unit. These forums would differ from the overall forums recommended above, as they would be specifically targeted to raising and addressing issues and themes within Melton. With a reasonably new Major Development team there is opportunity to reconsider the approach to the forums and newsletters in line with the directions of the renewed Major Developments Unit.	• To proactively engage with the Development Industry to assist in developing highly functional and collaborative working relationships in line with the directions of the Major Developments Unit.	Ongoing engagement with the development industry is critical in developing healthy working relationship. Previously Council undertook engagement with developers by organising developer forums and regular newsletters particularly focussed on growth area planning. In more recent year, and largely due to resourcing issues, the forums and newsletters have not been implemented.	Introduction of at least 2 development forums (or similar) each year. Regular communication to the development industry from Council through newsletters at least 2 x year.	Council Officers Developers Consultants	N/A
Internal Service Agreements Develop internal service agreements, with a particular focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities, confirm procedures, timeframes/targets and planner empowerment. Service agreements should seek to minimise common referrals that that the Major Developments Unit could readily assess against guidelines/use standard conditions, and reinforce 'one bite at the cherry' style of assessment while ensuring all external correspondence expresses the 'one voice' of Council. The role of internal departments in provision of pre-application should also be formalised.	• To minimise time spent considering permit application referrals by referral departments within Council. • To empower planners to provide clear, concise and consistent advice to applicants as the one voice on behalf of Council. • To clarify 'advisory' versus 'decision-making' roles across the assessment and delivery process.	Due to staff turnover in the Major Developments Unit and a number of new officers including new leadership there is an opportunity for the Unit to regroup and review the way common internal referrals are being undertaken. Industry feedback has indicated that often the way referral comments are being relayed to applicants is in a copy and paste format and not a single voice response from Council. There is an opportunity for internal referrals to be more targeted, and that with a reduced number of referrals, improve timeframes while also empowering planners to provide clear, concise and consistent messaging to the development industry.	Reduced number of internal referrals Reduced number of referral cycles. More consistent decisions. Reduced timeframes and better outcomes.	Council officers (including internal referral departments).	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program

Communication + Culture

Review of Statement of Compliance (SOC) processes Improve processes relating to SOC including matters that fall out of the SOC process or occur post-SOC (e.g. return of bonds).This may include development of a bond tracking tool and Section 173 tracking tool and a review of resourcing for this function to ensure that return of bonds can occur in a timely manner.	• To ensure there are detailed processes and procedures in place both prior and post the issue of Statement of Compliance • To ensure the SOC process runs effectively and efficiently.	While Council generally have good processes in place in regard to SOC, an identified gap as part of the interview process was the management of Statement of Compliance processes post the issue of SOC. These issues mainly relate to bonds and potentially the ongoing implementation of Section 173 Agreements.	Bonds collected, tracked and returned in a timely manner. Compliance audit of Section 173 Agreements.	Council Officers	N/A
Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency Review Delegate Report template (and other related reporting templates) to encourage 'reporting by exception' – matters that genuinely contribute to the turn of a decision, rather than standardised content. This review should also include a brief review of Council's previous approach to recording its decision making. Any notable trends should be recorded, and recommendations should be provided for improvements. Consider removing submission and assessment requirements for State matters that have been addressed as the PSP level (e.g. State Policy and Clause 56), and creating a range of PSP specific templates that minimise repetitive effort. The review should be complemented by in-house training on effective report writing. This project complements VPA's Generally in Accordance with project. It is recommended that reports are circulated with the approved Planning Permit, to provide greater transparency about Council's decision making.	• To encourage more emphasis on matters that influence decisions • To minimise time and effort spent on preparation of delegate reports. • To provide greater transparency to the development industry about Council's decision making. To provide a clear record of Council's decision-making trends.	A Delegate Report template for each PSP area will significantly reduce officer time in preparing a delegate report. The template will also be able to capture all relevant information to a specific PSP and ensure that a consistent assessment across each permit application in the relevant PSP area is being undertaken.	Reduced time in preparing a Delegate Report. Consistency in the assessment and therefore decision making process. Focus on key issues	Council Officers Applicants	N/A
Quality Check System Introduce a quality check process to ensure correspondence from Council is being sent in a well written, accurate and professional format (e.g. further information letters).	To ensure all correspondence sent from Councils Growth Area team is well written, accurate and in a professional format.	Due to lack of staff resources, Council does not currently have in place a quality check on correspondence sent from Council. Currently the relevant officer will send the letter. The introduction of a quality check process will provide a framework to ensure all correspondence sent by Council is of a high standard. There are many different ways a quality check framework could be implemented including a hierarchical process or a buddy system.	Audit of files on an annual basis to check quality of Council correspondence.	Council officers	N/A

Communication + Culture					
Website content – Review and Enhancement Reviewing website content to improve the customer experience.	To create a highly efficient and user friendly website that is a “one stop shop” for all matters relating to growth area development.	Council planning websites can often go a number of years without a detailed review and may not provide the level of information that may be beneficial to an applicant. Improving the website can significantly enhance the quality of a permit application lodged and post permit approvals by providing clear guidance on Councils requirements.	Improved quality/level of information of permit application and post permit condition plans lodged with Council.	Council Officers Applicants	Digital Improvement Plan
Development contribution technology enhancement Improve existing technology or develop new technology to respond to the recent introduction of Infrastructure Contribution Plans. The system should provide efficiency in calculating contributions payable and credits applicable to landowners/developers, to streamline and fast-track landowner/developer meeting relevant permit conditions and achieving compliance in the planning process.	• To ensure Council has the appropriate technology available to satisfactorily manage Infrastructure Contributions Plans	Council currently use Chameleon for recording and managing contributions collected under the DCP system. However, a system is yet to be developed for the new Infrastructure Contributions Plan system. A recording and management system for infrastructure contributions is critical for Council to keep proper account of the significant infrastructure contributions portfolio, as required under the planning legislation.	Ability to be able to manage and track funds related to Infrastructure Contribution Plans.	Council Officers	Infrastructure sequencing tool
Infrastructure sequencing tool Develop an infrastructure sequencing tool that provides a spatial presentation of the anticipated sequence and timing of infrastructure projects	• To enable more strategic decision-making where development will likely trigger or generate a need for new development. • Assist with the assessment of Public Infrastructure Plan regarding infrastructure requirement and timing of provision; • Fast-track the negotiation process for works in-kind agreements; • Assist internal service teams for planning and prioritising recreation and community facilities delivery programs.	One of the challenges faced by Councils is to understand, plan and prioritise infrastructure provisions when building new communities in the greenfield growth areas. Councils have identified that an infrastructure sequencing tool that provides a spatial presentation of the anticipated sequence and timing of infrastructure projects will assist with more efficient and strategic decision-making.	Ability to make more informed decisions due to a better understanding of infrastructure requirements.	Council Officers	Development contribution management tool

Communication + Culture

Digital Improvement Plan Implementing a Digital Improvement Plan to create a paperless office. This should also include a review of platforms that have been created to assist in Digital Improvements (e.g. online planning permit application lodgement) and a review of existing technology (tracking functions, conditional plan submissions etc.) and any other software relevant to growth area planning to gain efficiencies. The Plan should also have consideration to opportunities to enhance the use of Spear, in particular the use of the 'managed conditions function' to assist in managing permit condition compliance.	• To create a paperless office for growth area planning. • To ensure Council's existing technology is being used to the best of its ability to enhance the processing of permit applications and permit condition compliance.	Technology is constantly evolving, and it is important for Council to regularly review its existing technology to ensure it is being used to gain maximum efficiencies. This includes the use of Spear with Melton being one of the only growth Councils that does not use the 'managed conditions function' to assist in tracking compliance with permit conditions. With Council proposing to implement electronic lodgement of permit applications this creates a significant opportunity to become a paperless office. The preparation of a Digital Improvement Plan in the first step in becoming paperless.	Significant reduction in printing and associated resources. Improved sustainability. Improvement to existing processes (simplified and improved timeframes to undertake tasks) through better use of existing technology that is available to Council.	Council Officers	Website content – Review and Enhancement

6 ACTION PLAN – MITCHELL

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Scale + Maturity					
	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program – with Executive and Councillors Undertake a facilitated program that seeks to foster cross-departmental understanding within Council, and to develop a council-wide vision with regard to integrated growth area implementation and delivery. This program will be used as the basis for other key programs and processes within Council. The focus of this program will be to develop a framework that empowers Council officers, in particular, enabling decisions to be taken with confidence at the officer level, rather than the Committee/Councillor level (review of delegations).	• To generate a sense of shared ownership across Council of objectives relating to growth area planning, acknowledging that Council is moving into a new phase of metro-scale growth • To empower Council Officers in the decision making process to make informed decisions in a swift and timely manner on behalf of Council.	Mitchell is on the cusp of greatly accelerated scale of volume of growth. In addition, currently Mitchell officers do not have delegation to make planning permit decisions. Now is the time to take stock of current systems and approaches, and plan a vision for the future of Mitchell growth area planning across the origination.	Reduction in the number of internal referrals required. Improved timeframes in the decision making process and resolving issues. Officer ownership of decisions	Council officers	N/A
	Brokered MOUs with Development Industry Develop a set of MOUs with key landholders in new PSP areas, with the MOUs to enable provision of a 'fee for service' model, with dedicated resources to applications, commitments to timeframes, and opportunities for innovation and different approaches to common standards. The agreements should be the result of a facilitated consultative approach between Council and the developer, to determine an agreed vision for the project and set of commitments.	• To develop a Council developer shared vision for specific projects, to provide a framework for innovation and improved on the ground outcomes (which may challenge conventional standards) • To enable Council to provide and meet commitments regarding timeframes based on funding for additional resources.	Faster approval timeframes for MOU projects. Better on the ground outcomes as a result of focus on innovation. Less resistance from the development partners to Council requirements (provided commitments are achieved)	Council officers Development industry	Casey and Wyndham MOU projects/pilots	

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Local Industry Forums + Info Sessions Develop a set of local industry forums targeted at small scale consultants and developers who work in the area. The forums should be interactive, and focus on increasing the awareness of consultants and developers of Council's requirements, their services, and the existing suite of templates and information available to assist them.	• To provide local consultants and developers with information on Council process, requirements and services.	In order to make best use of council resources, these forums are aimed at avoiding the need for council officer to spend time 'coaching' consultants and developers on local requirements and approaches. The forums will also assist in building an open and transparent relationship between council and the development industry	Fewer occasions where Council officers are required to 'coach' consultants and developers on application process and requirements. Build collective knowledge and a shared vision	Council officers Local development industry (small scale developers and consultants) External authorities	

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Process					
	Work flow procedures + targets Review, clarify and document workflow procedures for key planning and assessment processes, and set target timeframes.	• To document and formalise existing and proposed policies and procedures.	Mitchell acknowledged that there are currently very few procedures and policies in place, given their relative inexperience in growth area planning.	Improved timeframes	Council officers	
	Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency Review Delegate Report template (and other related reporting templates) to encourage 'reporting by exception' – matters that genuinely contribute to the turn of a decision, rather than standardised content. This review should also include a brief review of Council's previous approach to recording its decision making. Any notable trends should be recorded, and recommendations should be provided for improvements. Consider removing submission and assessment requirements for State matters that have been addressed as the PSP level (e.g. State Policy and Clause 56), and creating a range of PSP specific templates that minimise repetitive effort. The review should be complemented by in-house training on effective report writing. This project complements VPA's Generally in Accordance with project. It is recommended that reports are circulated with the approved Planning Permit, to provide greater transparency about Council's decision making.	• To encourage more emphasis on matters that influence decisions • To minimise time and effort spent on preparation of delegate reports. • To provide greater transparency to the development industry about Council's decision making. • To provide a clear record of Council's decision-making trends.	Mitchell are in the unique position where subdivision applications are approved by Delegates Committee, rather than the planning officer. This project should be geared towards enabling decision-making to transition to the planning department.	Improved decision-making timeframes A report the writes itself (almost)	Council officers Development industry	VPA Generally in Accordance with Project

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Infrastructure sequencing tool Develop an infrastructure sequencing tool that provides a spatial presentation of the anticipated sequence and timing of infrastructure projects	• To enable more strategic decision-making where development will likely trigger or generate a need for new development. • Assist with the assessment of Public Infrastructure Plan regarding infrastructure requirement and timing of provision; • Fast-track the negotiation process for works in-kind agreements; • Assist internal service teams for planning and prioritising recreation and community facilities delivery programs.	One of the challenges faced by Councils is to understand, plan and prioritise infrastructure provisions when building new communities in the greenfield growth areas. Councils have identified that an infrastructure sequencing tool that provides a spatial presentation of the anticipated sequence and timing of infrastructure projects will assist with more efficient and strategic decision-making.	Ability to make more informed decisions due to a better understanding of infrastructure requirements.	Council Officers	Development contribution management tool
	Infrastructure sequencing tool Develop an infrastructure sequencing tool that provides a spatial presentation of the anticipated sequence and timing of infrastructure projects, to efficient and strategic decision making, where key infrastructure is to be delivered.	• To enable more strategic decision-making where development will likely trigger or generate a need for new development. • Assist with the assessment of Public Infrastructure Plan regarding infrastructure requirement and timing of provision; • Fast-track the negotiation process for works in-kind agreements; • Assist internal service teams for planning and prioritising recreation and community facilities delivery programs.	One of the challenges faced by Councils is to understand, plan and prioritise infrastructure provisions when building new communities in the greenfield growth areas. An infrastructure sequencing tool that provides a spatial presentation of the anticipated sequence and timing of infrastructure projects will provide the following benefits: • Assist with the assessment of Public Infrastructure Plan regarding infrastructure requirement and timing of provision; • Fast-track the negotiation process for works in-kind agreements; • Assist internal service teams for planning and prioritising recreation and community facilities delivery programs.	Ability to make more informed decisions due to a better understanding of infrastructure requirements.	Council Officers	Development contribution management tool

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Plan assessment guidelines and templates Prepare a set of guidelines, checklists and templates for submission of permit and plan materials (e.g. Landscape plans, EMPs, DCPs/PIPs, design guidelines etc). The guidelines should provide transparent information about how Council will assess these materials.	• To enhance the quality of material submitted to Council for approval • To provide transparency to the development industry about Council's assessment procedures.	Mitchell do not currently have any guidelines or templates for key plans and other information to be submitted (e.g. Landscape plans, EMPs, DCPs/PIPs, design guidelines etc). Mitchell can learn from other Councils, such as Casey, Wyndham and Cardinia, who have well-developed sets of guidelines.	Improved submission material Shared and consistent knowledge of council requirements	Council officers Development industry	

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Resources					
	Additional Staff Resource – Planning + Engineering Bring on board a consultant resource that can assist with workload, but also be tasked with internal training and modelling of approaches, procedures and behaviours required to respond to high level of growth, and to negotiate with large-scale developers. There are opportunities to also look at alternative approaches to staffing (internships, shared resources, retired workers, targeting 'tree-changers' etc).	• To implement the workflows, policies and procedures that will assist Council in responding to large-scale new growth • To provide a resource that can model approaches, procedures and behaviours required for managing metro-scale growth.		Cleared backlog Better work life/ balance for staff Enhanced shared learning opportunities	Council officers	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program
	Digital Improvement Plan Prepare a growth area planning specific action plan for digital improvements as an input to Council-wide review of IT infrastructure. The review should also identify small-scale changes that can be made within the planning team in the interim.	• To take early steps towards implementation of a paperless office	Mitchell have a hard copy-based records system. Changes to this system will need to be considered Council-wide. Preparation of a digital improvement plan could be a catalyst or input to that process.	Reduced paper-based records	Council officers Council Executive	Workflow Procedures and Targets
	SPEAR for Multi-lot Subdivisions Trial Trial a program that encourages large-scale/regular developers to lodge multi-lot subdivisions applications via SPEAR. The program should integrate with Council's Records Department to explore ways to minimise hard copy use of records.	• To make use of existing technology to enable more transparent and efficient lodgement and processing of applications.	Mitchell is in the early stages of digital improvement, and as such tailored lodgement software in unlikely to be financially viable at this stage. As such, SPEAR present ready-made opportunities for online lodgement that could be trialled.	Reduced paper-based records Improved timeframes	Council officers Local development industry	Specialised Growth Area SPEAR training Digital Improvement Plan

7 ACTION PLAN – WHITTLESEA

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Scale + Maturity					
	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program Undertake a facilitated program that seeks to foster cross-departmental understanding within Council, and to development a council-wide vision with regard to integrated growth area implementation and delivery. This program will be used as the basis for other key programs and processes within Council. With the Whittlesea organisational structure no longer having a specific Planning Directorate, it is critical the program integrates growth area planning across the relevant directorates. The focus of this program will be to develop a framework that empowers Council officers (in particular planning officers who are responsible for the issue of the planning permit) to make informed decision in a swift and timely manner on behalf of Council.	• To empower Council Officers in the decision making process to make informed decisions in a swift and timely manner on behalf of Council. • To ensue growth area planning is a collaborative and integrated process across Council.	Council has strong internal relationships currently in place, however there is room to formalise the cross-departmental growth area planning understanding within Council, in particular with Council no longer having a specific planning directorate. A program that can deliver an integrated growth area implementation and delivery vision will assist in officers having the confidence and ability to make informed decisions in a timely manner on behalf of Council and potentially reduce the number of internal referrals and meetings required.	Reduction in the number of internal referrals required. Improved timeframes in the decision making process and resolving issues. Increased understanding of the Planning and Environment Act	Council officers	Internal Service Agreements
	Development Industry Forums Instigate developer forums to assist in strengthening relationships with the development industry. These forums would differ from the overall forums recommended above, as they would be specifically targeted to raising and addressing issues and themes within Whittlesea.	To proactively engage with the Development Industry to assist in developing highly functional and collaborative working relationships.	Ongoing engagement with the development industry is critical in developing healthy working relationship.	Introduction of at least 2 development forums (or similar) each year.	Council Officers Developers Consultants	

Internal Service Agreements Review internal service agreements, with a particular focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities, confirm procedures and timeframes/targets. Service agreements should seek to minimise common referrals that can be readily assessed against guidelines/use standard conditions, and reinforce 'one bite at the cherry' style of assessment. The Agreements should also remove the need for numerous referrals to occur on an application. The review should also include consideration of other plans lodged and referred within Council throughout the lifecycle of the permit (Eg landscaping, engineering plan etc). The role of internal departments in provision of pre-applications should also be formalised.	• To minimise time applications, spend being considered by referral departments within Council. • To clarify the remit of internal referrals to minimise extraneous requirements and obligations of permit applications. • To clarify 'advisory' versus 'decision-making' roles across the assessment and delivery process.	While Council already has a well-established referral process (The PAT process), there are still opportunities to refine this process and improve cross-departmental collaboration. It was identified as part of the questionnaire that Council in particular in regard to engineering plans and Functional Layout Plan often undertakes a number of internal referrals which is in contrast to most other Growth Area Councils.	Reduced number of internal referrals Reduced number of referral cycles. Improved timeframes.	Council officers (including internal referral departments).	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program Review of Functional Layout Plan (FLP) & Civil Plan requirements and processes Review of Open Space Embellishment Requirements Review of Construction Management Plan processes

Process					
Review of Administrative processes Reviewing administration processes relating to planning applications to gain efficiencies. This would include mapping of processes and working towards use of online application modules.	To ensure all administrative tasks are being undertaken in the most efficient and effective manner.	Administrative processes often go a number of years without a review. Efficient administrative processes require regular review to ensure the tasks are being performed in the most effective way.	Improved timeframes in completing the tasks.	Council Officers	Digital Improvement Plan Review of Pre Application Process Creation of a platform for the electronic lodgement of planning permit applications. Preparation of a Digital Improvement Plan
Review of Pre-Application process Reviewing and formalising a pre-application process. This should include reviewing roles and responsibilities of those involved, and identifying the level of feedback to be provided.	• To create a pre-application process that provides benefit to both Council and the applicant prior to the lodgement of the permit application.	The survey industry feedback indicated a general dissatisfaction to the existing pre-application process with the main concern being that pre-application agreements and discussions often did not flow through to the permit application phase.	Consistency between pre-application advice and permit application assessment. Improved industry satisfaction to pre-application process.	Council Officers Applicants	Review of Administrative Processes

Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency Review Delegate Report template (and other related reporting templates) to encourage 'reporting by exception' – matters that genuinely contribute to the turn of a decision, rather than standardised content. This review should also include a brief review of Council's previous approach to recording its decision making. Any notable trends should be recorded, and recommendations should be provided for improvements. Consider removing submission and assessment requirements for State matters that have been addressed as the PSP level (e.g. State Policy and Clause 56), and creating a range of PSP specific templates that minimise repetitive effort. The review should be complemented by in-house training on effective report writing. This project complements VPA's Generally in Accordance with project.	• To encourage more emphasis on matters that influence decisions. • To minimise time and effort spent on preparation of delegate reports. • To provide greater transparency to the development industry about Council's decision making. • To provide a clear record of Council's decision-making trends.	A Delegate Report template for each PSP area will significantly reduce officer time in preparing a delegate report. The template will also be able to capture all relevant information to a specific PSP and ensure that a consistent assessment across each permit application in the relevant PSP area is being undertaken.	Improved decision-making timeframes	Council officers Applicants	N/A
Review of Functional Layout Plan (FLP) & Civil Plan requirements and processes Review FLP & Civil Plans process including which department should be responsible for managing these submissions. The review should also consider the content of the FLP & Civil Plans planning permit condition to ensure that only relevant information is captured.	• To ensure FLPs and Civil Plans are prepared, submitted assessed and approved in an efficient and effective manner.	The FLP and Civil Plans process has been identified as a weak point for Council and an area that requires further improvement, in particular in regard to approval timeframes. A review of the existing process and level of information being requested as part of an FLP & Civil Plans creates an opportunity to significantly improve Council assessment and approvals of FLPs & Civil Plans. In undertaking the review Council should also engage with other Growth Area Councils to seek an understanding of the level of information being requested as part of an FLP and Civil Plan processes.	Improved timeframes in the approval of FLP and Civil Plan approvals. Improved industry satisfaction in regard to the FLP and Civil Plans processes.	Council Officers	Internal Service Agreements

Review of open space embellishment requirements Review open space requirements to provide clarity in regard to the level of open space embellishment required. This review should also consider preparing guidelines to assist in providing clear guidance to the development industry in regard to opens space expectations.	• To provide a framework that ensures open space is embellished to an appropriate standard. • To provide clear guidance to the development industry in regard to open space embellishment expectations.	Open Space embellishment has been identified as an area that requires further review to ensure open space is being delivered to an appropriate standard. There is currently a lack of clear guidance for open space requirements and a set of guidelines could provide a framework that provides clear guidance for both Council officers in assessing landscape plans and the development industry preparing the plans. A set of guidelines should also assist in improving timeframes in regards to the approval of landscape plans. In undertaking the review Council should also engage with other Growth Area Councils to seek an understanding of open space embellishment in other municipalities.	Improved timeframes in the approval of landscape plans. Improved industry satisfaction in regard to landscape processes.	Council Officers	Internal Service Agreements
Review of Construction Management Plan processes Review the process for endorsing, managing, implementing and enforcing Construction Management Plans to provide clarity regarding roles and responsibilities of each department and to provide appropriate supporting information to staff and applicants.	• To ensure Construction Management Plans are prepared, submitted, assessed, approved and enforced in an efficient and effective manner.	The approval process for Construction Management Plans was seen as a weakness across most Council and often creating delays in construction work commencing. A review of existing processes and procedures has an opportunity to significantly enhance the approval process for Construction Management Plans. In undertaking the review a document should be prepared and made available to applicants as to what Councils expectations and requirements are in regards to Construction Management Plans.	Improved timeframes in the approval of Construction Management Plans.	Council Officers	Internal Services Agreement

Resources					
Review website and counter content Reviewing website content and information at the counter to improve the customer experience. Undertake customer journey mapping to gauge user experience.	• To create a highly efficient and user friendly website relevant to growth area planning processes. • To create a positive experience for customers visiting the Planning enquiry counter by having a range of material readily available.	Council planning websites and information available at a Council counter can often go a number of years without a detailed review and may not provide the level of information that may be beneficial to an applicant. Improving the website and information available at the counter can significantly improve the quality of a permit application lodged and post permit approvals by providing clear guidance on Councils requirements.	Improved quality/level of information of permit applications and post permit condition plans lodged with Council.	Council Officers Applicants	Digital Improvement Plan
Creation of a platform for the electronic lodgement of planning permit applications Ability to lodge planning applications online.	• To create an electronic lodgement platform that allows growth area planning permit applications to be lodged online.	The questionnaire highlighted that Councils that have the ability to accept permit applications on line create a number of efficiencies in regards to the lodgement process of a permit application, and therefore improved timeframes.	Improved timeframes in the processes associated with the lodgement of growth area permit applications.	Council Officers Applicants	Review of Administrative processes.
Development contribution technology enhancement Improve existing technology or develop new technology to respond to the recent introduction of Infrastructure Contribution Plans.	• To ensure Council has the appropriate technology available to satisfactorily manage Infrastructure Contributions Plans	Council currently uses Majiq for recording and managing contributions collected under the DCP system. However, a system is yet to be developed for the new Infrastructure Contributions Plan system. A recording and management system for infrastructure contributions is critical for Council to keep proper accounting of the significant infrastructure contributions portfolio, as required under the planning legislation. The system will also provide efficiency in calculating contributions payable and credits applicable to landowners/developers, to streamline and fast-track landowner/developer meeting relevant permit conditions and achieving compliance in the planning process.	Ability to be able to manage and track funds related to Infrastructure Contribution Plans.	Council Officers	Development of an Infrastructure Sequencing Tool

Development of an infrastructure sequencing tool Develop an infrastructure sequencing tool that provides a spatial presentation of the anticipated sequence and timing of infrastructure projects	• To create a sequencing tool that spatially identifies infrastructure projects, sequencing of development and timing.	One of the challenges faced by Councils is to understand, plan and prioritise infrastructure provisions when building new communities in the greenfield growth areas. An infrastructure sequencing tool that provides a spatial presentation of the anticipated sequence and timing of infrastructure projects will provide the following benefits: • Assist with the assessment of Public Infrastructure Plan regarding infrastructure requirement and timing of provision; • Fast-track the negotiation process for works in-kind agreements; • Assist internal service teams for planning and prioritising recreation and community facilities delivery programs.	Ability to make more informed decisions due to a better understanding of infrastructure requirements.	Council Officers	Development Contribution Technology Enhancement
Preparation of a Digital Improvement Plan Implementing a Digital Improvement Plan to create a paperless office. This should also include a review of platforms that have been created to assist in Digital Improvements (e.g. online planning permit application lodgement) and a review of existing technology (tracking functions, conditional plan submissions etc.) and any other software relevant to growth area planning to gain efficiencies.	• To create a paperless office for growth area planning. • To ensure Councils existing technology is being used to the best of its ability to enhance the processing of permit applications and permit condition compliance.	Technology is constantly evolving, and it is important for Council to regularly review its existing technology to ensure it is being used to gain maximum efficiencies. With Council proposing to implement electronic lodgement of permit applications this creates a significant opportunity to become a paperless office. The preparation of a Digital Improvement Plan in the first step in becoming paperless.	Significant reduction in printing and associated resources. Improved sustainability. Improvement to existing processes (simplified and improved timeframes to undertake tasks) through better use of existing technology that is available to Council.	Council officers	Review of Administrative Processes Review of Website and Counter Content

8 ACTION PLAN - WYNDHAM

No.	Action	Objective	Rationale	Measure of success	Stakeholders	Project linkages
	Scale + Maturity					
	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program Undertake a facilitated program that seeks to foster cross-departmental understanding within Council, and to development a council-wide vision with regard to integrated growth area implementation and delivery. This program will be used as the basis for other key programs and processes within Council. The focus of this program will be to develop a framework that empowers Council officers (in particular planning officers who are responsible for the issue of the planning permit) to make informed decision on behalf of Council while also taking into account the Vanguard method and how it can be applied to growth area planning.	• To empower Council Officers in the decision making process to make informed decisions on behalf of Council.	As part of the questionnaire, Council interview and industry feedback empowerment of planning officers has been seen as a weakness currently within Council which results in often numerous internal referrals and delayed timeframes in resolving issues when they arise. A program that can deliver an integrated growth area implementation and delivery vision will assist in officers having the confidence and ability to make informed decisions in a timely manner on behalf of Council.	Reduction in the number of internal referrals required. Improved timeframes in the decision making process and resolving issues.	Council Officers	Internal Service Agreements Risk Setting Review Review of existing MOU approach
	Risk Settings Review Undertake a review of Council's current 'risk settings' in the context of growth area planning and delivery decision-making while balancing between 'risk' and achieving innovative development outcomes. The review should seek to find an appropriate balance where council does not 'sweat the small' stuff', but instead focuses time and energy on substantive issues that generate positive outcomes. This project will influence and be influenced by other recommended projects, including the Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program and Internal Service Agreements.	• To recalibrate Council's risk settings to encourage greater diversity and innovation in growth area outcomes. • To ensure that the right information is required at the right time. • To ensure requirements asked of developers are not unnecessarily onerous and results in a proportionate benefit (to the community or process).	Industry feedback has identified that while Council has in place many beneficial policies and procedures to guide growth area planning, in some cases, a low tolerance for risk is reducing the ability to achieve innovative development outcomes that have an overall community benefit.	Faster, more efficient decisions, that do not compromise acceptable outcomes for Council and the community.	Council officers Applicants	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program Internal Service Agreements Review of existing MOU approach Case Manager Implementation Program

Scale + Maturity					
Development Industry Forums Instigate developer forums to assist in strengthening relationships with the development industry. These forums would differ from the overall forums recommended above, as they would be specifically targeted to raising and addressing issues and themes within Whittlesea.	• To proactively engage with the Development Industry to assist in developing highly functional and collaborative working relationships.	Ongoing engagement with the development industry is critical in developing healthy working relationship.	Introduction of at least 2 development forums (or similar) each year.	Council Officers Developers Consultants	N/A
Review of the existing MOU approach Review of the MOU and any opportunities that may exist to further expand, develop and enhance the MOU and associated processes. While the existing MOU has a focus on timelines, there is opportunity to expand the MOU to assist in fostering improved innovative outcomes.	• To identify opportunities and further develop the MOU to create an innovative and proactive MOU to assist in facilitating growth area development.	Council has successfully implemented an MOU to assist in facilitating development in the growth areas. With the MOU now established there is now opportunity to consider how the MOU could evolve to further facilitate and enhance growth area planning and incorporate improved design outcomes through creativity and innovation.	Development of the MOU beyond what it currently covers (committed timeframes).	Council officers Developers	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program Risk Setting Review Internal Service Agreements Case Manager Implementation Program
Case Manager Implementation Program Consider the development of a Case Manager Implementation Program that allows dedicated resources to manage a development across all phases of the implementation and delivery (pre application through to Statement of Compliance). The purpose of this approach is to provide a dedicated resource to each development for the lifecycle of the development that can act as the Council voice and ensure advice and approvals to developers is consistent, timely, well managed and responsive without unnecessary delays.	To adopt a beginning to end philosophy for the implementation and delivery of growth area planning through the use of case managers.	From the questionnaires, interviews and industry feedback the Councils that seem to have the most successful implementation and delivery model have adopted a case manager or similar approach to growth area planning. Opportunities exist within Wyndham to consider a similar model to improve service delivery and decision making.	Council officers (including internal referral departments).	Review growth area planning processes in line with Councils current implementation of the Vanguard method Risk Setting Review	

Internal Service Agreements Review internal service agreements, with a particular focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities, confirm procedures, timeframes/targets and recalibrate the balance of power to ensure decision makers (usually planners) are empowered to make decisions. Service agreements should seek to minimise common referrals that can be readily assessed against guidelines/use standard conditions, and reinforce 'one bite at the cherry' style of assessment. The Agreements should also remove the need for numerous referrals to occur on an application. The review should also include consideration of other plans lodged and referred within Council throughout the lifecycle of the permit (Eg landscaping, engineering plan etc). The role of internal departments in provision of pre-applications should also be formalised.	• To minimise time applications, spend being considered by referral departments within Council. • To clarify the remit of internal referrals to minimise extraneous requirements and obligations of permit applications. • To clarify 'advisory' versus 'decision-making' roles across the assessment and delivery process.	While Council already has a well-established referral process there are still opportunities to refine this process and improve cross-departmental collaboration.	Reduced number of internal referrals Reduced number of referral cycles.	Council officers (including internal referral departments)	Cross-Council Growth Area Vision Program Communication Protocol Review of Construction Management Plan processes

Process					
Review growth area planning processes in line with Councils current implementation of the Vanguard method Review of existing administrative processes in relation to growth area planning taking not accounts Councils overarching implementation of the Vanguard method.	• To improve administrative efficiency for growth area planning in line with the Vanguard method.	Council have adopted the Vanguard method and consideration should be had to ensuring the growth area planning processes are consistent with this method.	Improved administrative efficiencies.	Council Officers	Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency Review of Construction Management Plan processes
Delegate Report Improvements and Transparency Review Delegate Report template (and other related reporting templates) to encourage 'reporting by exception' – matters that genuinely contribute to the turn of a decision, rather than standardised content. This review should also include a brief review of Council's previous approach to recording its decision making. Any notable trends should be recorded, and recommendations should be provided for improvements. Consider removing submission and assessment requirements for State matters that have been addressed as the PSP level (e.g. State Policy and Clause 56), and creating a range of PSP specific templates that minimise repetitive effort. The review should be complemented by in-house training on effective report writing. This project complements VPA's Generally in Accordance with project. It is recommended that reports are circulated with the approved Planning Permit, to provide greater transparency about Council's decision making.	• To encourage more emphasis on matters that influence decisions • To minimise time and effort spent on preparation of delegate reports. • To provide greater transparency to the development industry about Council's decision making. • To provide a clear record of Council's decision-making trends.	A Delegate Report template for each PSP area will significantly reduce officer time in preparing a delegate report. The template will also be able to capture all relevant information to a specific PSP and ensure that a consistent assessment across each permit application in the relevant PSP area is being undertaken. On review of delegate report from the other growth area Councils, Wyndham seems to have the longest reports. A review of the detail included in the report is recommended to ensure the reports are clear and concise.	Reduced time in preparing Delegate Report. Consistency in the decision making process.	Council Officers	Review growth area planning processes in line with Councils current implementation of the Vanguard method

Review of Construction Management Plan processes Review the process for endorsing, managing, implementing and enforcing Construction Management Plans to provide clarity regarding roles and responsibilities of each department and to provide appropriate supporting information to staff and applicants	• To ensure Construction Management Plans are prepared, submitted, assessed and approved in an efficient and effective manner.	The approval process for Construction Management Plans was seen as a weakness across most Council and often creating delays in construction work commencing. A review of existing processes and procedures has an opportunity to significantly enhance the approval process for Construction Management Plans. In undertaking the review, a document should be prepared and made available to applicants as to what expects a Construction Management Plan to include.	Improved timeframes in the approval of Construction Management Plans.	Council Officers	Internal Service Agreements Review growth area planning processes in line with Councils current implementation of the Vanguard method

Resources					
Review website and counter content Reviewing website content and information at the counter to improve the customer experience.	To create a highly efficient and user friendly website relevant to growth area planning processes. To create a positive experience for customers visiting the Planning enquiry counter by having a range of material readily available.	Council planning websites and information available at a Council counter can often go a number of years without a detailed review and may not provide the level of information that may be beneficial to an applicant. Improving the website and information available at the counter can significantly improve the quality of a permit application lodged and post permit approvals by providing clear guidance on Councils requirements.	Improved quality/level of information of permit application and post permit condition plans lodged with Council.	Council Officers Applicants	Preparation of a Digital Improvement Plan
Preparation of a Digital Improvement Plan Implementing a Digital Improvement Plan to create a paperless office. This should also include a review of platforms that have been created to assist in Digital Improvements (e.g online planning permit application lodgement, advertised planning permit application online).	• To create a paperless office for growth area planning.	With Council proposing to implement electronic lodgement of permit applications this creates a significant opportunity to become a paperless office. The preparation of a Digital Improvement Plan in the first step in becoming paperless.	Significant reduction in printing and associated resources. Improved sustainability.	Council Officers	Review website and counter content

PART 4.

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1: COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Question	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Overall / General Quantity and type of applications							
How many 'growth areas' were active within Council's designated growth areas in the 2017/2018 financial year?	3	9 + couple of infill development plans	8 PSP + 6 DP	11	12 PSP's + 15 DP's	5 PSP's + 40 DP's	1 to 2
What is the estimated net developable areas of these combined active growth areas?	610ha	1760.91ha	1,844ha	166.247ha in 2017 / 18 (Circa 8,000ha)	PSP's 4227ha	6500ha	221.83ha
How many 'growth areas' were pending within the 2017/2018 financial year?	2	5	6	TBA	3	5	4
What is the estimated net developable areas of these combined pending growth areas?	610ha	745ha	1,495ha	1,200ha	?	1200ha	848ha
In the 2017/2018 financial year, how many statutory applications for subdivision were lodged within your municipality's active growth areas (for subdivisions of greater than 10 lots)?	26	47	37	49	35 applications including amended - 75 secondary consents	60	0

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
In the 2017/2018 financial year, what type of developers lodged statutory applications for subdivision? a. Large scale developers b. Mid-scale developers c. small scale developers	a.0 b.17 c.8		a. 5 b. 6	a. 65% b. 25% c. 10%		a. 70% b. 20% c. 10%	
In the 2017/2018 financial year, what type of developers lodged ghost applications for subdivision? a. Large scale developers b. Mid-scale developers c. small scale developers	0		none officially	a. 30% b. 70% c. 0		None received	

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Resources							
How many EFT staff are allocated to growth area subdivision applications? A. Planning b. Engineering (including subdivision engineers, traffic engineers, infrastructure engineers etc) c. Open space, environment, landscape e. Social/Community f. Other (please specify)	a. 4 EFT b. 5 plan checking engs and 2 surveillance c. 1 (Urban design + Traffic waste + DCP) d. 0 e. Subdivision is 1 EFT	a. 7 b. 9 c. 1 e. 0 f. DCP / Finance x 4	a. 8; 3 x GA stat planning, 2 x subdivisions officers 1.5EFT x management of DCP/WIK, 1x EFT referrals, 0.5 EFT x NAC's b. 12.5 EFT; 6 x engineers, 5 x civil construction supervisors, 1.5 EFT x traffic engineers c. 6; 4 x EFT landscape planner, 2 x EFT landscape supervisor e. 1; 1 x social and community f. 1 x sustainable environment department	a. 10 b. 7; Infrastructure Planning Coordinator, Infrastructure Planning Engineer, Major Projects & Development engineer, 3 x development engineers, graduate engineer c. 7 d. 0 e. Urban design 3, Strategic Planning 2	a. 6 planners only b. 9 & 3 admin c. 5 landscape, 1 Open Space, 2 Environment d. 0 e. 3 subdivision, admin for planning 3, DC team 3	a. 11; 6 x planners, 3 x strategic planners, 2 x admin b. 14.5; 12 x engineers, 2.5 x subdivision officers c. 3 e. 1 f. 2 x urban design, 1.5 x sustainability, 3 x Strategic Infrastructure Planning (DCP)	a. 3; 2 x strategic planning in GA, 1 x stat planning b. 3.6 EFT c. 0.4 EFT (landscape architect)

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
List position title and level of experience for each planner involved in assessing growth area subdivision applications.			Coordinator stat planning - 23 years, Senior subdivision officer - 32, subdivision officer - vacant (3-5 years), Senior planner - 12 years, Senior planner - 16 years, Manager subdivision - 42, Manager Planning - 18	Coordinator Major Development = 7 months at Melton and 8 years at VPA Senior Major Dev Planner x 2 = 2 years and 8 years Major Dev Planner x 2 = 1 year and 6 months		Principal planner - 15 years Senior planner - 10 years Planning Officer 10 years, Planning Officer - 5 years, Planning Officer - 4 years	Coordinator Statutory Planning 8 years of planning experience, Coordinator of Transport and Development 20 years plus.
In general, how would you rate collective the skills of your team in terms of effectiveness in relation to: a. Statutory knowledge (i.e. of the planning system, the Act and the scheme) b. Growth area planning issues c. Urban design d. Construction processes e. Project management f. Facilitation and negotiation g. Creative problem solving h. understanding of property development economics i. Relationship building (internally and externally)	a. very b. very c. somewhat d. very e. very f. extremely g. very somewhat i. somewhat	a. extremely b. extremely c. very d. very e. very f. very g. very h. somewhat i. very	a. very b. very c. very d. very e. somewhat f. somewhat g. very h. somewhat i. very	a. very b. very c. very d. very e. very f. very g. very h. somewhat i. extremely	a. extremely b. very c. somewhat d. somewhat e. very f. very g. very h. not so i. very	a. very b. very c. very d. very e. not so f. very g. very h. somewhat i. very	a. very effective b. very effective c. somewhat effective d. very effective e. somewhat effective f. very effective g. very effective h. somewhat effective i. extremely effective
In general, what capacity do you consider your team to be working at (rate of a scale of 1 to 5, from 'Under capacity' to 'Over capacity"	Over capacity	Over capacity	Over capacity	At capacity	At capacity	Over capacity	Greatly over capacity

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
What do you consider to be the biggest barrier to recruiting new planners?	Distance to office, pool of planners is limited at all levels, uni's teach anti-growth so that impacts mentality of newer planners, difficult to recruit experienced engineers - they tend to have less than 3 years experience, senior people not out there	competitive financially, geographical distance, specialist nature of work/skills - most planners have inner/middle planning experience. Where do you draw subdivision officers? Experienced growth area planners harder than graduates. Engineers dong major projects across the state (pay levels/geography)	Sunbury out of Hume because of uncertainty - lag effect of vacant positions (over an extended period). Number of jobs versus qualified people - interviewed, offered and planner has chosen inner over coming to Broadmeadows. Marketplace- lack of skilled personnel. Train and then they leave - tend to stay for limited time. Churn at lower levels, but senior levels pretty stable. Recruit from within and up skill. Worse in engineering sector because of all major government projects. Planners intimidated by growth area planning (developers and numerous consultants). Technology is a barrier - online software/processing online - digital transformation.	competitive market, shortage of experience in growth areas, private sector taking them, location, understanding what the role is	experience in growth areas, finding planners interested in growth areas, perception of the role in term of who you are dealing with can be intimidating, overall shortage of planners in the industry	experience, expertise in growth areas, even planners with no experience is hard to find	

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Pre-application Process							
Do you have a formal preapplication process? If yes, please specify the process.	no - There is a paid process for other permit apps, but growth area planners don't use it. Want to encourage people to come in. $118.	no	yes	yes	yes, Is an application form, submit full set of plans, internally refer, provide a whole of council response and assessment, issues, have a meeting, after meeting provide written response. Developers try and get advice informally – what do you think of this. The uptake on formal advice isn't as high as the informal advice. No fee.	Pre-applications are encouraged and GADA takes a proactive approach in providing comprehensive advice and open communication. Basic pre-app is: check to see for past discussion, if documents submitted for review refer internally per PAT. Timeframe should be 2 - 3 weeks. If applicant has requested a meeting invite the PAT team then send documents around for review and comment. Timeframe should be 2 - 3 weeks for a response (2 to review and 1 to collate/negotiate/write). "it is important to provide all relevant information to the PAT team in the internal referral text so that we have the full context when we are making decisions and don't accidentally contradict ourselves" From the Whittlesea GADA process guide.	yes
Do you require plans to be submitted prior to preapplication meeting?	yes	don't always receive them	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
In general, preapplication meetings are conducted prior to submission of an application: a. never b. rarely c. sometimes d. often e. almost always	usually	sometimes	usually	usually	usually	usually	
On average, when an application goes through a preapplication process, how many preapplication meetings are conducted prior to submission of an application?	1 to 2	1 but depends sometimes more	larger developers 1 smaller developers often 2	1	1	1 occassionally 2	10
Who generally attends preapplication meetings (in terms of skills/disciplines)?	Statutory Planner, Subdivision Engineer, Open Space / Landscape Engineer, Traffic Engineer, Urban Designer	Stat planner, subdivision engineer but depends on issues sometimes rec planner, strategic, traffic eng	strategic, stat, sub eng, open space/landscape.	stat, sub eng, urban design	strategic, stat, sub eng, open space/landscape, urban design	strategic, stat, sub eng, open space/landscape, urban design	stat, sub eng, open space/landscape, urban design
Generally, what is the highest level of seniority of officers attending preapplication meetings? a. CEO b. Director / General Manager c. Manager d. Coordinator / Principal e. Senior officer	Coordinator/Principal	Coordinator/Principal	Manager	Coordinator/Principal	Coordinator/Principal	Coordinator/Principal	Coordinator/Principal

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
f. Officer (not senior) g. Other (please specify)							
Are preapplication meetings generally led by Council or the developer?	Council	Developer	Developer	Developer	Council	Council	Council
In general, what feedback does Council see as most important to provide during a preapplication meeting (rank in order of importance): a. Subdivision design b. Technical engineering advice c. Process advice (e.g. application process, timeframes, personnel) d. DCP/ICP advice (include advice regarding WIK) e. Other (please specify)	2,1,4,3	2,4,1,3	2,3,1,4	1,2,3,4	1,2,3,4	1,2,3,4	1,2,4,3
Are the outcomes of the meeting recorded?	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
If yes, by who?	Council	Council	Other	Applicant	Council	Council	
In general, do applications received following a	somewhat responsive	somewhat responsive	somewhat responsive	very responsive	somewhat responsive	somewhat responsive	somewhat responsive

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
preapplication process directly respond to preapplication feedback?							
In general, does Council believe the preapplication process results in higher quality outcomes on the ground?	agree	agree	agree	strongly agree	agree	agree	neither agree not disagree
In general, does Council believe the preapplication process results in faster application assessment timeframes?	agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	neither agree or disagree	neither agree or disagree	neither agree not disagree

Permit assessment process Allocation	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Does Council have a preferred method for lodgement of applications? a. Hard copy (by mail or hand delivery) b. Electronic (via centralised email) c. Electronic (via email directly to an officer) d. Electronic (via online portal)	electronic	electronic	hard copy	electronic via email	b and d	a,b,c	Electronic
How are applications generally lodged (please specify estimated percentage): a. Hard copy (by mail or hand delivery) b. Electronic (via email) c. Electronic (via online portal) e. Other (please specify)	20% hard copy, 35% via email, 45% online portal	70% electronic via email, 30% online portal	hard copy 90%, electronic via email 5%, online portal 5%	90% hard copy, 10 % via email	90% via email, 10% electronic portal - have a process for paperless permit applications	90% hard copy, 10 electronic via email	a 30%, d 70%
What do you consider may be a barrier to applicants not using Council's preferred lodgement method?	older people prefer hard copy, whether they are aware of it ,consultancy set up to do it.	teething issues with portal, dosent recognise multiple addresses, easier to put in a singe email, habit, some issues with payment	frustration with printing procedure causes deley, recording, printing, Trim etc	Internal it limitations	no barriers, bit confused as there are two options, not looking to role out the online portal more broadly	would prefer online but not currently availabe, being worked on	Double up, Council recording files by paper and electronic, Council trying to paperless, issue is file size, cant you dropbox, recently moved to sharepoint
Does Council have a preference for extent of permit application area: a. Limited number of	b	b	b	c	no	no	B

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
stages/lots (specify) b. Full extent of masterplan/estate c. No preference							
If there is a preference for permit application extent, what is the reason for the preference?	implementation wise easier, stuff doesn't get lost	complete picture	creates more work for small permit areas				better to see big picture
When a permit application is received, what is the process for allocation? A. Team meeting b. Allocated by Manager/Coordinator c. other (please specify)	a	b	a	b	a	a	B
In general, how long from receipt of an application until allocation to a planning officer? A. within 5 working days (i.e. 1 working week) b. 5 - 10 working days (i.e. 2 working weeks) c. 10 - 20 working days (i.e. 3-4 working weeks) d. 20 days or more	wthin 2 days	b	b	b	a	b	b
What do you consider to be the key factor that contributes to allocation efficiency?	team meeting, everyone being there, regularity of meetings	not yet automated, available time of coordinator	regularity, weekly meetings, assigned officers for diff growth areas for consistency	can sit with coordinator a few days- capacity issue, volume of applications	electronic lodgement		paper based system is slow
If a preapplication process was undertaken, in general,	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
does the pre-application officer continue to handle the application							
Preliminary review							
Is a preliminary review of the application generally undertaken	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
If no, why?							
At which point in time in the application first reviewed (preliminary review)? (select most relevant) a. Prior to allocation to planning officer b. Prior to referral to internal departments/officers c. Prior to sending Further Information Response to applicant d. No set point in time e. Other (please specify)	b	prior to allocation of planning officer and sending further info letter	b	a	b,c	a	a
In general, how much time is spent on the preliminary review?	1 day	4-5 hours	complex a few hours, simple - cursory	20-25mins	6-8 hours	15mins	1 hour at most
In general, who is involved in the preliminary review? (tick all that apply) A. The allocated planner b. Core internal referral departments (e.g. engineers c. all internal referral departments d. Planning supervisors (e.g.	allocated planner, core internal referral depts	allocated planner and planning supervisors	allocated planner	d	a	team leader	Coordinator

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
coordinators/Managers) e. Senior management (e.g. Directors, General Mangers) f. Other (please specify)							
What type of matters are considered in the preliminary review (tick all that apply): a. Completeness and quality of application (all mandatory information supplied) b. Identification of key issues c. Layout / design review d. Consistency with planning provisions, PSP (plans and Requirements/Guidelines) or other strategic document e. Referral requirements / instructions d. Other (please specify)	all	all	all	a,b,d,e	all	all	all
In general, in the 2017/2018 financial year how many active applications was each EFT planner responsible for?	20 permits, 15 implementation		tba	60 - s72's and secondary consents	20ish		40

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
In general, what contributes most to the complexity of an application (rank from most important to least important): a. the scale of the application area (i.e. number of lots/stages) b. Site specific issues c. Level of sophistication of the developer d. The approach of or relationship with key consultants (e.g. planning consultant) e. the quality of the urban design / masterplan layout f. the quality of the application material g. Other (please specify)	1,2,5,6,3,4,7	6,2,1,4,5,3,7	4,1,2,3,5,6,7	6,2,1,5,4,3,7	3,1,6,5,2,4,7	4,2,6,5,1,3,7	1,7,3,4,5,6,2
If substantial issues are identified during the preliminary review (either with the content or quality of the application material or the proposal) what generally happens next? a. Informal notification to applicant (e.g. verbally or via informal written communication) b. Formal further information request (e.g. written letter) c. application continues through application process (i.e. no contact with	b	if easy to fix get in early, both discuss first then write formal further info letter	informal approach but depends	b	informal notification to applicant (verbally or via informal written communication)	b	b

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
applicant) d. Other (please specify)							
Do you have any further comments regarding the preliminary review process?		consultative approach to addressing issues, concisous of clock because of reporting obligations, Formal RFI important, have discussions upfront when issues are known	may write an email/letter prior to internal referral			online system would improve process	

Referrals

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
At what point are internal referrals sent? a. Immediately upon receipt of application (without preliminary review) b. Following preliminary review of application, prior to RFI c. Following receipt of RFI material from applicant (i.e. when an application is considered complete) d. Other (please specify)	b	when application allocated	b	b	b	b	immediately after allocation
At what point are external referrals sent? a. Immediately upon receipt of application (without preliminary review) b. Following preliminary review of application, prior to RFI c. Following receipt of RFI material from applicant d. Other (please specify)	Depends if there are issues with app. If things will change, send after RFI	when application allocated	b	b	b	b	immediately after allocation
Are internal referrals sent with any content/issues/questions identified by the planner? If yes, please specify.	yes	no	yes	no	yes	yes - PAT process	yes
Are internal referral officers given a timeframe within which to respond?	14	14	21	14	yes 14 days, MOU 10 days for further info so internal referrals need to be done prior	yes 14 days for first and 5 for second.	21

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
In general, do internal referrals respond within the nominated timeframes?	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
What is the primary reason for internal referral responses to be delayed? A. Officer workload b. Low priority - e.g. Planning referrals are not the core focus of the department/unit c. Lack of knowledge/skills to enable a clear response d. Other (please specify)	lack of resources for complex growth area apps	officer workload	a	a	a	a	a and c
In general what departments/teams are sent internal referrals?	eng, traffic, landscape, DCP (in eng), waste, environment, ud	eng, traffic, landscape, DCP (in strategic), drainage - as required waste, environment, ud	strategic, sub eng, sustainable environment, social dev/open space, leisure	Urban design, eng, landscape, open space, environment	eng, subdivision, transport, open space, landscape, DCs, coast & water, env & sustainability	dev eng, parks and open space, urban design, sustainability, strategic planning, strategic infrastructure planning.	eng, open space, strategic (icp items) enviro, arborist,
In general, how many times per application does an internal referral get sent?	on complex ones 2-3 times	depends if amended in response to RFI and whether further advice is required whether it is satisfactory.	Depends on issues, often an informal approach is taken	1 but if issues or relevant information received re referred. Often meeting with applicant instead of referral	3	2 but to relevant dept	2 at most

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
How are internal referral comments communicated to applicants? a. Written referral responses sent directly to applicant (no or limited collation or review of responses for internal consistency) b. Written referral responses collated into a single letter representing a Council position c. Verbal comments provided in a meeting (directly from referral departments/units) e. Verbal comments provided in a meeting (from planner) f. Other (please specify)	written referral responses collated into a single letter representing Councils position	b,c,e	written responses collated into a single letter, verbal comments provided in a meeting (from planner). Unless there are key issues then invite relevant planners. Regularly monthly meetings can be used as a forum to discuss letter.	b	b	b	written responses are sent after the response is reviewed by the planner
In general, do external referrals respond within the statutory timeframes?	no	no	no	yes	no	yes	yes
If no, which external referrals are consistently delayed?	VR, CFA, APA, VTS (pipeline transmission people)	VR, TforV, MW	VR, Melb Airport, Downers Gas, sometimes MW, PTV, DELWP	Powercor challenging, TforV sometimes delays	VR, powercor, TforV	VR are bad	
What is the process if there is internal disagreement/inconsistency within the infernal referral comments?	planner mediates, planner gets final say on what is communicated	planner collates information, captains call, go back to depts if necessary and negotiate	Meeting held prior to written internal comments issued by planner. Pre app process also helps	meet and discuss, eng and ud often talk prior to comments being written to resolve inconsistencies	Process Assessment Team meeting every Tuesday to discuss referral responses, agenda set the week before.	PAT process, flow chart provided	a meeting is held to discuss the response

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Do you have any further comments regarding the referral process?			timeframe of authorities to get back are out of step with complexity of application	working well		pretty perfect internally	
Further information requests							
Further information requests	0.77	70 - 90%	0.9	0.95	0.65	1	All ghost applications
In the 2017/2018 financial year, what proportion of those applications had a request for further information sent out within the statutory 28 days of receipt of application?	0.89	0.95	0.75	0.9	0.92	0.8	1
Who reviews and/or signs off further information request letters prior to sending?	Planner	Principal Planner	Planner	Allocated planners	Assessment officer - no review process	Principal and senior planners	The allocated planner
In general, what kind of content is included in further information letters (tick all that apply)? A. Requests for additional information to be supplied (i.e. missing information) b. Identification of early issues identified with the application c. Identification of urban design issues d. Suggestions of potential improvements to the application content e. Suggestions of potential improvements to the urban design/layout	A B C D E	A B C D E	A B C D E	A B C D E	A B C D E	A B C D E	A B E

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
In general, what proportion of further information submissions from applicants are complete?	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.9	0	0.5
In further information responses are incomplete, what is Council's general process? A. Continue to assess the application based on information supplied b. Hold further assessment until information supplied c. Other (please specify)	B Send them an RFI and give extension of time	Decide how to deal with the missing information - conditions etc.	B	A	A	A	Assess the information submitted, then ask for the outstanding information
In the 2017/2018 financial year, what proportion of further information responses were provided back to Council within the set timeframe?	0.59	90% asked for an extension of time	1	0.75	0.59	0	None as only for the ghost applications
In the 2017/2018 financial year, what proportion of applicants requested an extension of time to supply further information?	0.41	50% as some warehousing goes on	0.9	0.25	0.7	Generally it was to extend the lapsed date - 60%	They use the ghost application process, so assumes that most will need an extension of time

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
In general, how are further information responses lodged with Council? a. Hard copy (by mail or hand delivery) b. Electronic (via centralised email) c. Electronic (via email directly to an officer) d. Electronic (via online portal)	C	B C	C And hard copy in mail + CC to central	A C	B C D	C	C
In general, is the entire further information package distributed to all internal referrals?	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you have any further comments regarding the further information processs?			The timeframes of 28 days aren't realistic	Timely part of the process		They have a piecemeal approach to lodgement of the documents	

Permit assessment	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
In general, how much time is dedicated to preparation of delegates reports?	1 day	For major subdivisions: 8 - 12 hours	2 days	2 days	20 hours	2 - 3days	2.5 days
In general, what percentage of a delegates report is specific/unique content related to the application?	0.8	0.5	0.75	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.2
In general, how many pages are delegates reports?	8 - 10. Some can be 40+	45	15 – 25 The conditions can push it out	40 pages	90	75	25
Who within Council has delegation to sign off on reports and permits?	Senior and principals. Growth area planners can but tend not to.	Principal planners and above	Senior planners and above	Coordinator up	Team leaders, coordinators, managers	Under review - but the principal	Coordinator, Manager, Director
In general, how long does it take for a delegates report to be reviewed and approved?	Less than a week	Couple of days	1 week	1 - 3 days	2 - 3 days	1 - 3days	4 hours for a 25 page report
Does Council use a standard set of draft conditions?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, copy provided transparent record of changes made to conditions, seem to be regularly updated.	Yes, copy supplied seem ok but not necessarily design for growth areas, have not been updated since 2016
How often are standard conditions varied? Please specific when variations usually take place.	All the time as they need to be specific to things like topography, environment or infrastrcuture.	Frequently, they're varied to the specific case	Tend to be bespoke, they use a template to check off.	0.3	Yes - 10%	Yes - 30%	Not often

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Are draft conditions circulated for comment: a. internally AND b. to applicant	To applicant	To applicant	Internally	To applicant	To applicant	To applicant	Internally
If conditions are circulated, is a timeline provided for comments to be received? If yes, please specify.	No	Yes - 5 days	No	No	Yes - 7 days	Yes - 1 week- they included a protocol cover sheet when they are circulates this is really good.	No
In general, do you consider that review of draft conditions adds value to the assessment process? If yes, please specify.	Yes - less likely to get appeals and requests for amendments	Yes	No	Yes - review site specific conditions, provide checks, reduces the needs for amendments	No	Yes - avoids amendments, clarifies the intention of the condition and potential appeals	Yes - avoids going back and recorrecting assessment
Do you have any further comments regarding the assessment process?							
Decision making							
In general, are decision making roles clear within Council (please rank on scale from unclear to very clear)	Extremely clear	Extremely clear	Very clear	Extremely clear	Very clear	Very clear	Somewhat clear
What types of decisions are allocated planners empowered to make? Please describe.	Not a formal approach, a judgment based decision by the planner. If they want to seek advice, then they do.	Principal planners have full delegation except for refusals	Planners can adjudicate and work together with they see right.	Further information, changes to proposals, feedback and comments	Seniors can do all the correspondence up to permit issued and condition plans Not 173's and DC's Only have senior and up in growth areas	Depends on the experience of the planner - new staff will be trained about RFI and negotiations	If knowledgeable or they understand councils views, then most. Otherwise consultation.

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
How often does communication (written and verbal) from Council reflect a single 'Council' voice or position? Please rank from 'never' to 'always'	Usaully	Always	Usually	Always	Usually	Always	Usually
Is there a formal escalation process if issues are raised by the applicant? If so, please specify	No	Council policy, but not a planning one	Have a chat up thec chain of commandf or there's an opt in weekly meeting.	No	No	Yes - PAT process	
Conditions Compliance							
Subdivision concept plan							
Which departments/units are involved in assessment of the overall subdivision concept plan?	Sent to the relevant department, otherwise for small issues bought up at weekly team meeting.	Planning	Relevant departments - engineering , landscape, environment.	Engineering, city design and major developments	Planning officer	Development engineering, parks and open space, growth area development assessment	Planning, engineering, urban design
In the 2017/2018 financial year, how long, on average, did it take from lodgement to approval of subdivision concept plans?	1 month	3 - 4 weeks	2 weeks	221 days	170 days (43 days for secondary consent)	58	200 days (Have some legacy files warping timeframes)
What are the key barriers to timely approval of subdivision concept plans?	Consistency and changing plans.	Depends how much the applicant is trying to stretch their boundaries	Developers trying to sneak s172's into their conditions reports.	Trying to seek changes beyond the scope of condition 1's.		Resources, documentation, knowledge	

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Functional layout plans							
Which departments/units are involved in assessment of functional layout plans?	Submitted directly to the engineers and then allocated accordingly.	Subdivision engineers	Subdivision engineer. These aren't mandatory for developers to lodge.	Engineering	Engineering	Stat planning, parks and open space, development engineering	Engineering
In the 2017/2018 financial year, how long, on average, did it take from lodgement to approval of functional layout plans?	10 working days for first check, 5 days for rechecks. Usually 2 - 3 times through.	2 - 3 weeks	NA - 2 weeks for comments.	2018 - down to 7 days	15 days	100	N/A
When are functional layout plans required to be submitted: a. With the initial application (all applications) b. With further information response (i.e. if FLPs required to assist with assessment of site specific issues) c. As a condition of permit d. Other (please specify)	Accepted prior to issue of permit, but won't approve until the permit.	B C	Not required.	C	C Sometimes are submitted prior to permit being issued	C	C
What are the key barriers to timely approval of functional layout plans	Incomplete documentation	Workload		Quality of the submission	Staging of approvals submitted prior to the concept plan approved	The information is generally not aligned with the permit	Mostly covered off in the concept plans and cross sections. More benefit to do the FLP's for the whole estate.

Construction plans	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
In the 2017/2018 financial year, how long, on average, did it take from lodgement to approval of construction plans?	3 weeks for the assessment, 1 - 2 weeks for subsequent. Usually goes through 2 reviews.	4 - 5 weeks	90 days for in-house assessment	15 days	22 days	135 days	10 working days initial response, then 5 days for the resubmission. If not, then 28 days.
Which departments/units are involved in assessment of construction plans?	Engineering, traffic, environment	Subdivision and development engineering	Civil subdivision engineers.	Engineering	Engineering	Development engineering, parks and open space, infrastructure, maintenance	Engineering and occasionally environment.
What are the key barriers to timely approval of construction plans?	Incomplete documents or plans not following the permit. Subdivisio n plan not certified.	Sometimes they're submitted to early	Back and forth over missing information. Rework or make changes but not notifying council.	Quality of submission	Quality of information, misunderstandin g between parties		Workload and quality of the submissions.

Landscape plans	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
In the 2017/2018 financial year, how long, on average, did it take from lodgement to approval of landscape plans?	Acknowledged within 48 hours. 7 - 10 days for basic applications, 14 - 21 for more complex.	2 months. Department has a large backlog and doesn't work with the planning timeframes and structure.	Concept plans within 2 - 3 hours, landscape plans average 35 days for in-house assessment	Estimated 4 weeks	60 days - including time for consultants to make changes Feedback within 21 days	2 months	Aiming for 28 days for referral response, in line with engineering. However recently has been closer to 60 - 90 days.
Which departments/units involved in assessment of landscape plans?	Engineering and the landscape officer.	Landscape team. Subdivision and development engineering where required	Subdivision engineers	Landscape, engineering and major development	Landscape subdivision, engineering, open space, transport, coast and water, facilities		
What are the key barriers to timely approval of landscape plans?		Don't have authority under the act to endorse plans	Poor quality plans, rushed and careless.		Not responding to feedback, over embellishment		

Certification							
	Cardinia	**Casey**	**Hume**	**Melton**	**Wyndham**	**Whittlesea**	**Mitchell**
In the 2017/2018 financial year, how long did it take from lodgement of a plan of subdivision until certification?	Average for 2017/18 is 220 days	1 month	Certification - approximately 19 weeks (95 days) SOC - 2 days	Lodgement to cert = 174 days Cert to SOC = 336 days	405 days for approval	123 days for certification 30 days for SOC (SOC is very difficult to ascertain and this figure is an intelligent guess as there's little record keeping done on this stage, it also does not include internal referall times)	
What are the key barriers to timely certification of plans of subdivision?	If there is no permit at the time of certification approval Waiting on endorsed plans RA's gave 28 days to respond RA's Form 1 - stop for further info - ammend easements S173 if prior to Cert (to be approved by planning and lodged) Getting restrictions approved	Waiting on permit conditions to be endorsed. Developers not looking at managed conditions. Developers not having access to SPEAR. Plans lodged to early.	The application can be skewed by the developer priority list. The application can sometimes be lodged before the permit is issued or prior to certificate conditions	Not having everything completed as it didn't all require approvals.	Early works consent, External authorities	Timeliness and quality of internal and external information received, resourcing, surveyors signing off on the plans	Number of staff.

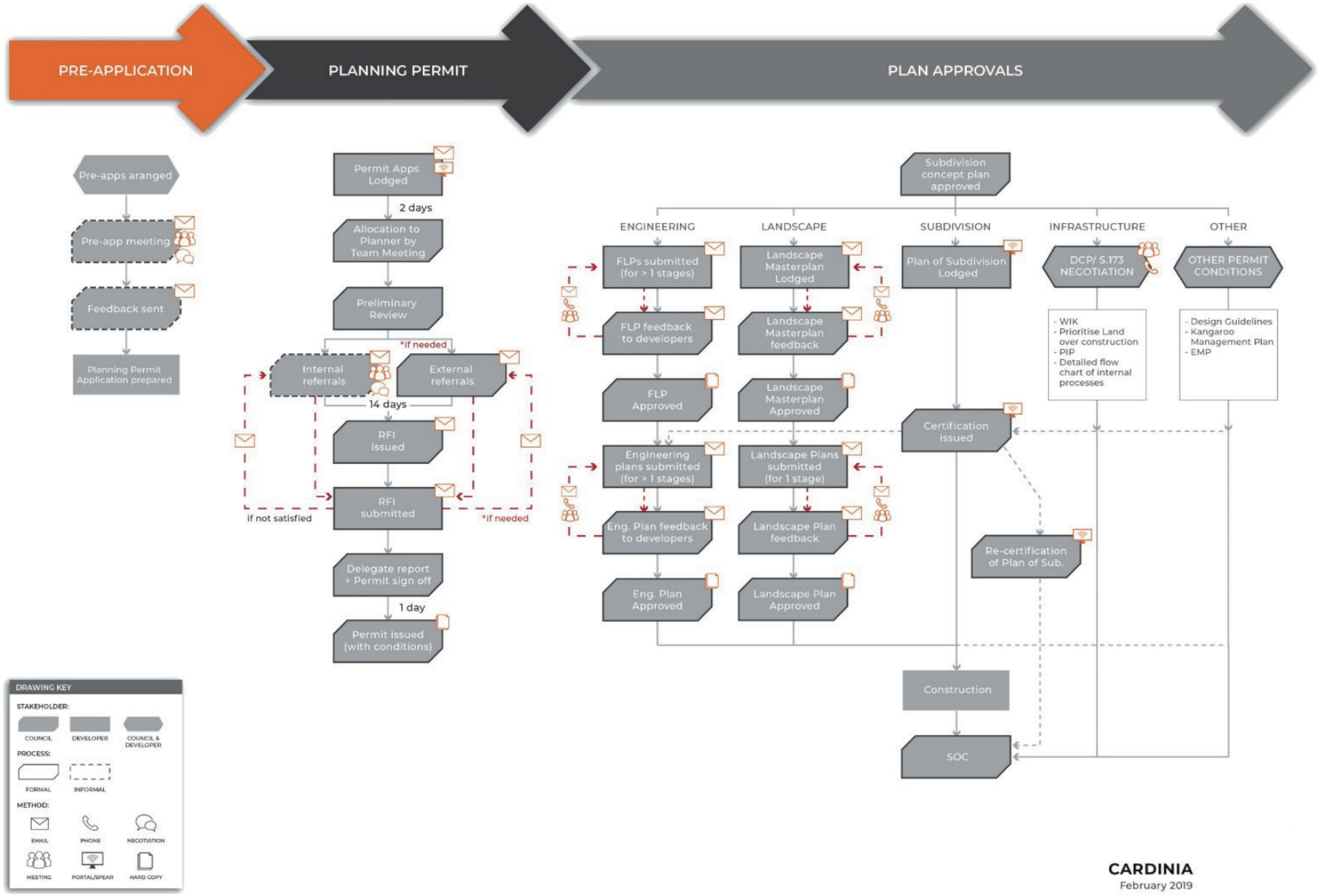
	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Do you have any further comments regarding the conditions compliance process?	Nominating who has to sign off on particular components in SPEAR can create delays.	SPEAR is to cumbersome for complex applications. The obligation to stocktake should be with developers not council.			Spear has been used but it's still very manual with limited integration	Needs to be more ownership of the conditions	
Development contributions negotiations							
At what point in the process are the general terms of development contributions agreements negotiated? A. During the preapplication process b. During the permit application assessment process (i.e. prior to issue of the permit) c. Following issue of the permit (as part of conditions compliance)	C	A	B Large scale - generally prior to relevant development approaching the stage with LIK/WIK items. Planing approval has usually been issued including S173. Small scale - discussions can be prior to planning approval or development commencing.	C	B	C	

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Is there are formal process for engaging in DCP negotiations with applicants/developers?	No, but they have internal process flow charts	apply for s173 early (preapplication), put a condition on permit (prior to cert of stage 1 173 registered), everything goes to Council (priority list) plus individual agreements. Currently reviewing the process/	Yes Developers must approach formally, then the request is assessed internally and reported to GAIPC. Subsequently considered by Exec Management and determined by full council.	No but there are DCP Guidelines and a Council Policy	No		No - strategic team
Who is responsible for DCP negotiations	Mostly engineering with input from the growth area planning. DCP officer works more on administration and schedules and the PIP.	Strategic Planning	Strategic planning	Allocated planner	Manager of Urban Futures and development Contributions team	Strategic Infrastructure	Strategic team but creating an ICP team
Who is responsible for singing off on negotiated agreements?	Co-ordinator of growth area planning.	Strategic planning delegates to the CEO	The CEO signs WIK/LIK negotiated agreements approved by council	Planning manager	CEO with delegation		Council is briefed, but signed off at manager level
In the 2017/2018 financial year, how many S.173 agreement were in negotiaiton regarding development contributions?	21	20	15 with a number having multiple items - approximately 25 DCP items	8	18	8	NA

	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
In the 2017/2018 financial year, how many S.173 agreement were signed/executed?	12	14	2		10	9	NA
In the 2017/2018 financial year, how many EFT staff were allocated to negotiating contributions agreements (including general negotiations and detail legal agreement negotiations)?	Less than 1. Weekly PIP/DCP meeting.	2 + some admin	1.5	3	4	3	
How many of the S173 Agreements signed include triggers for works to be undertaken prior to SoC?	All	All	One where the triggers are at SOC.	8	5	All	

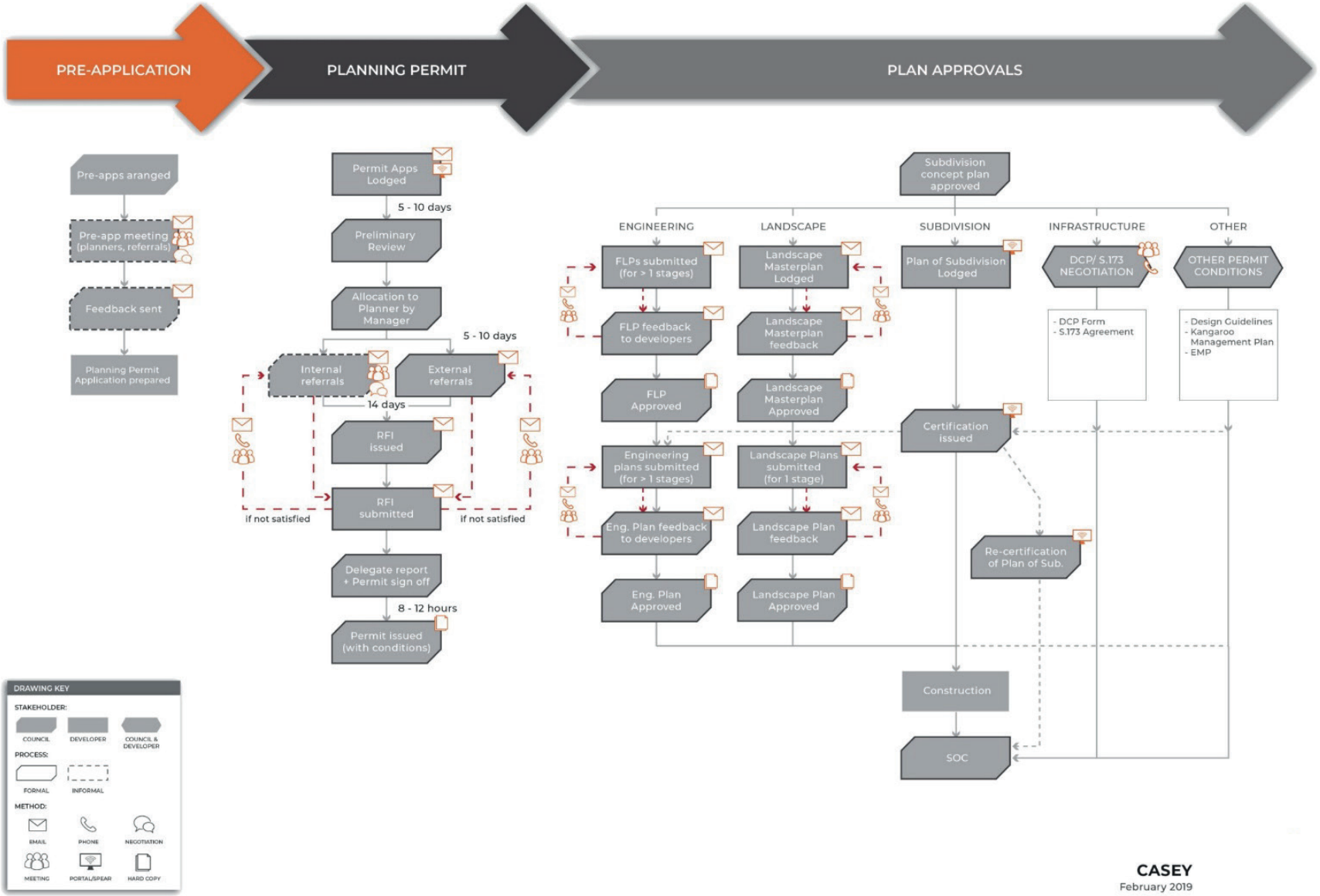
	Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
What factors are considered in supporting a works in kind or land in kind agreement?	They encourage WIK. If the credit exceeds the liability then council can pay them back. Prioritise land over construction.	Council report process undermines the priority list	Financial implications - of entering into the agreement Service need - benefits of early delivery if not in capital works long term plan Capacity - ability to manage the construction - Hume provided an assessment matrix for considering LIK/WIK proposals	Funds and priority lists.	The project priorities - cashflow and maintaining a surplus	Financial: Does the agreement reduce risk, close the funding gap, save money in the long term, minimise resource requirements. Quality: accord with relevant strategic documents, provide infrastructure to standards. Timing: reduce timeframes for delivery of infrastructure. prioritise delivery of infrastructure. Demand: assist to meet community demand. Significance: provide a catalyst for delivery of other projects.	
Public Infrastructure Plans	Have a great instruction sheet on what a PIP is and what should be included in the PIP						
DC processes	Have detailed flow charts for internal processes						

APPENDIX 2: JOURNEY MAPS FOR PERMIT PROCESS

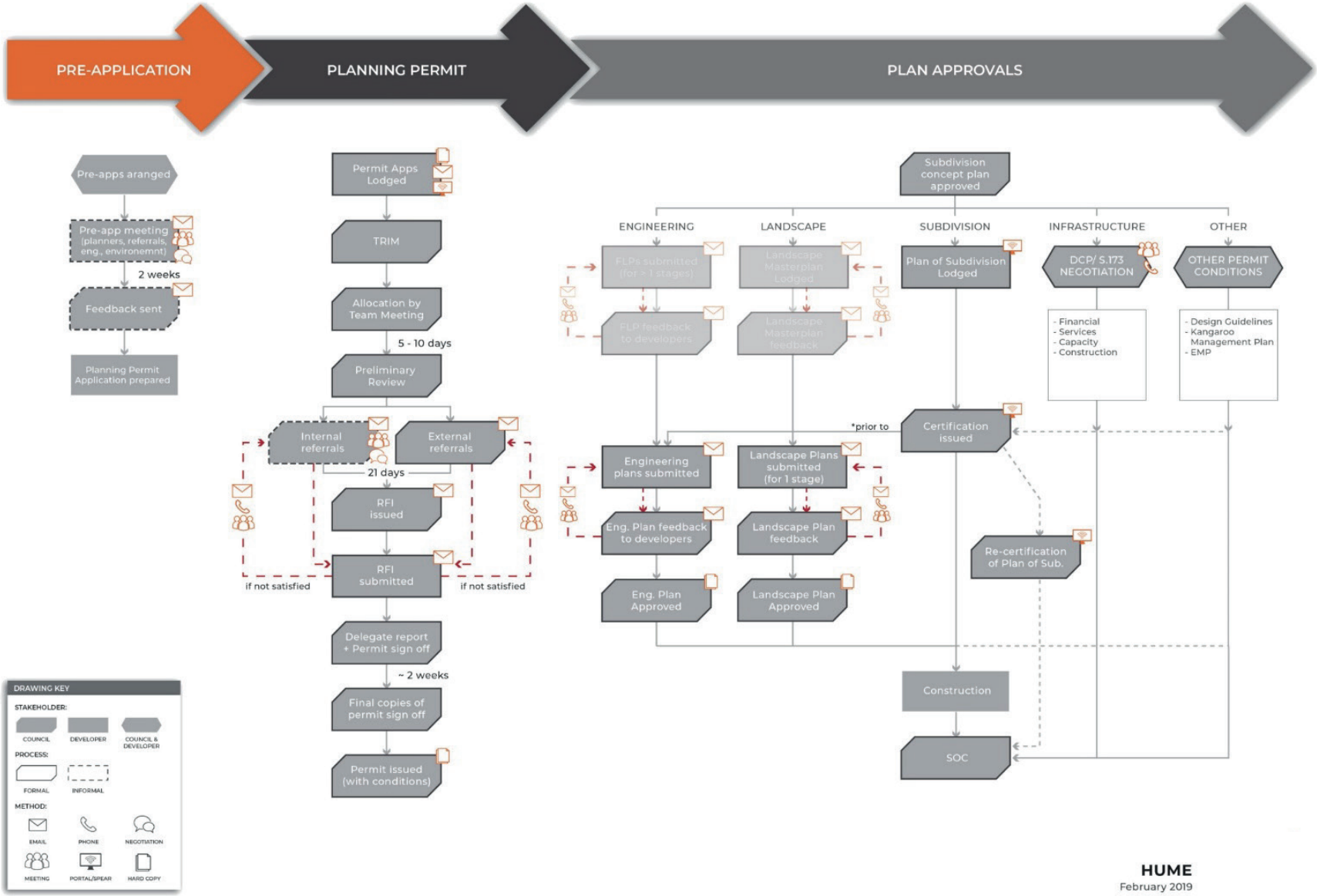


CARDINIA
February 2019

mesh

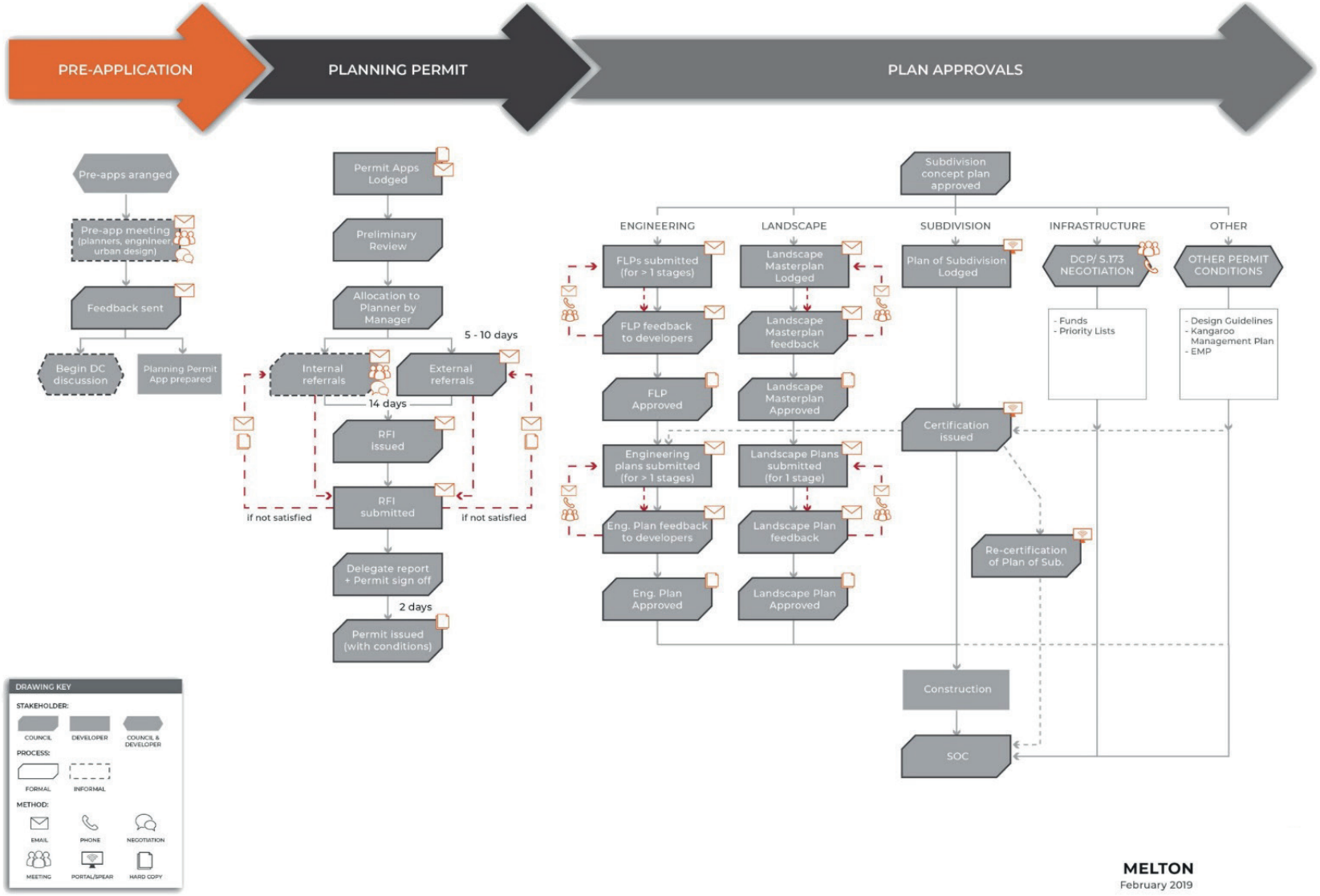


CASEY
February 2019

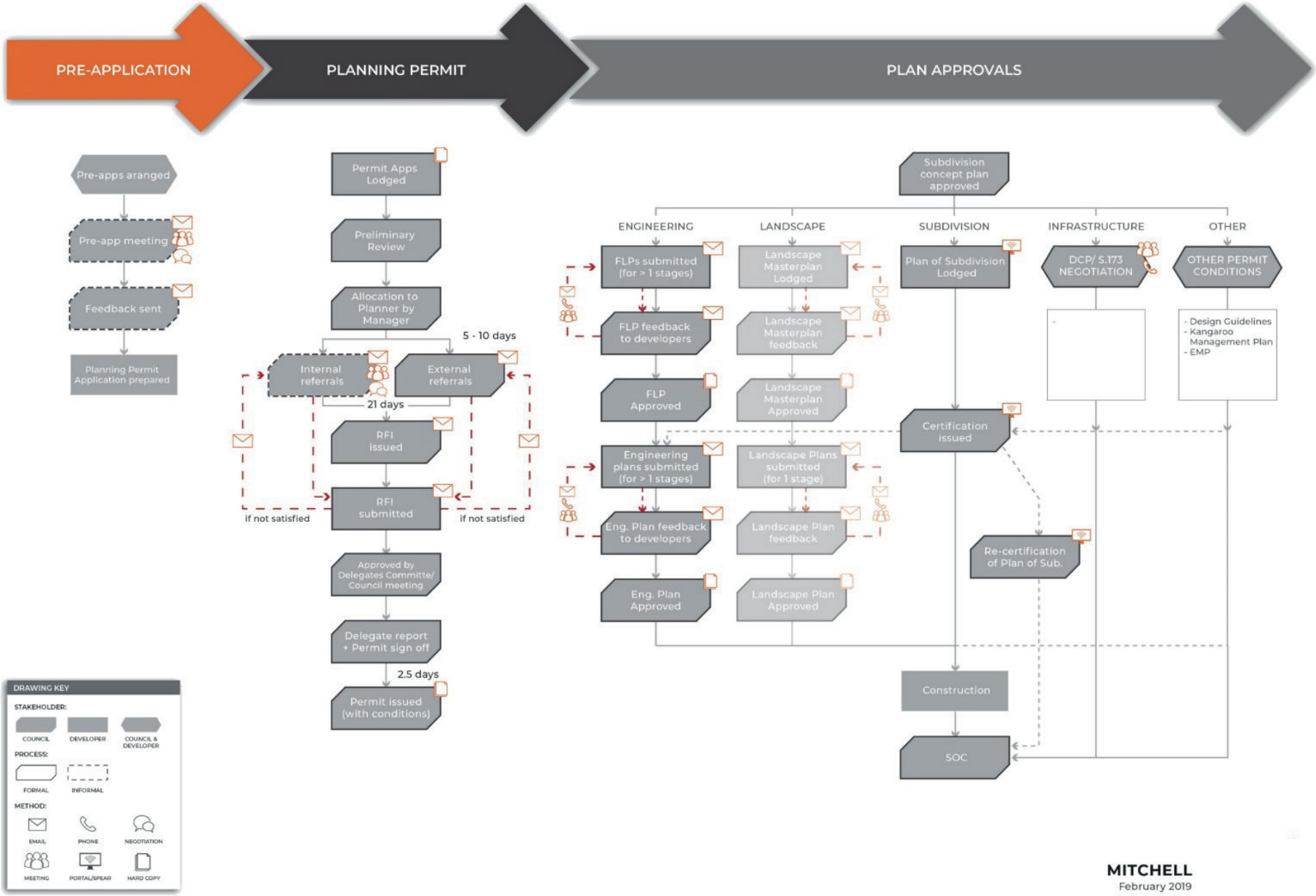


HUME
February 2019

mesh



MELTON
February 2019



MITCHELL
February 2019

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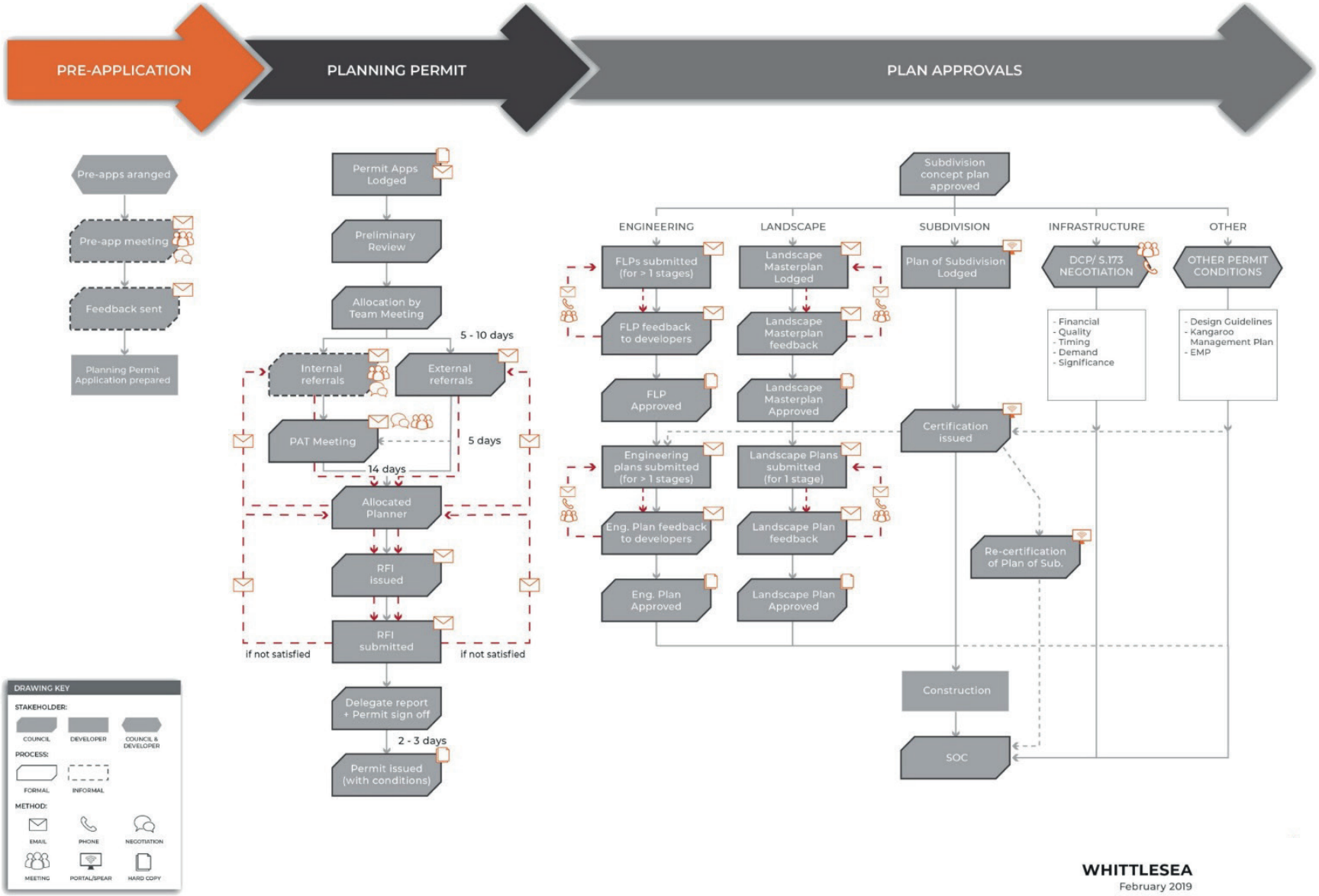
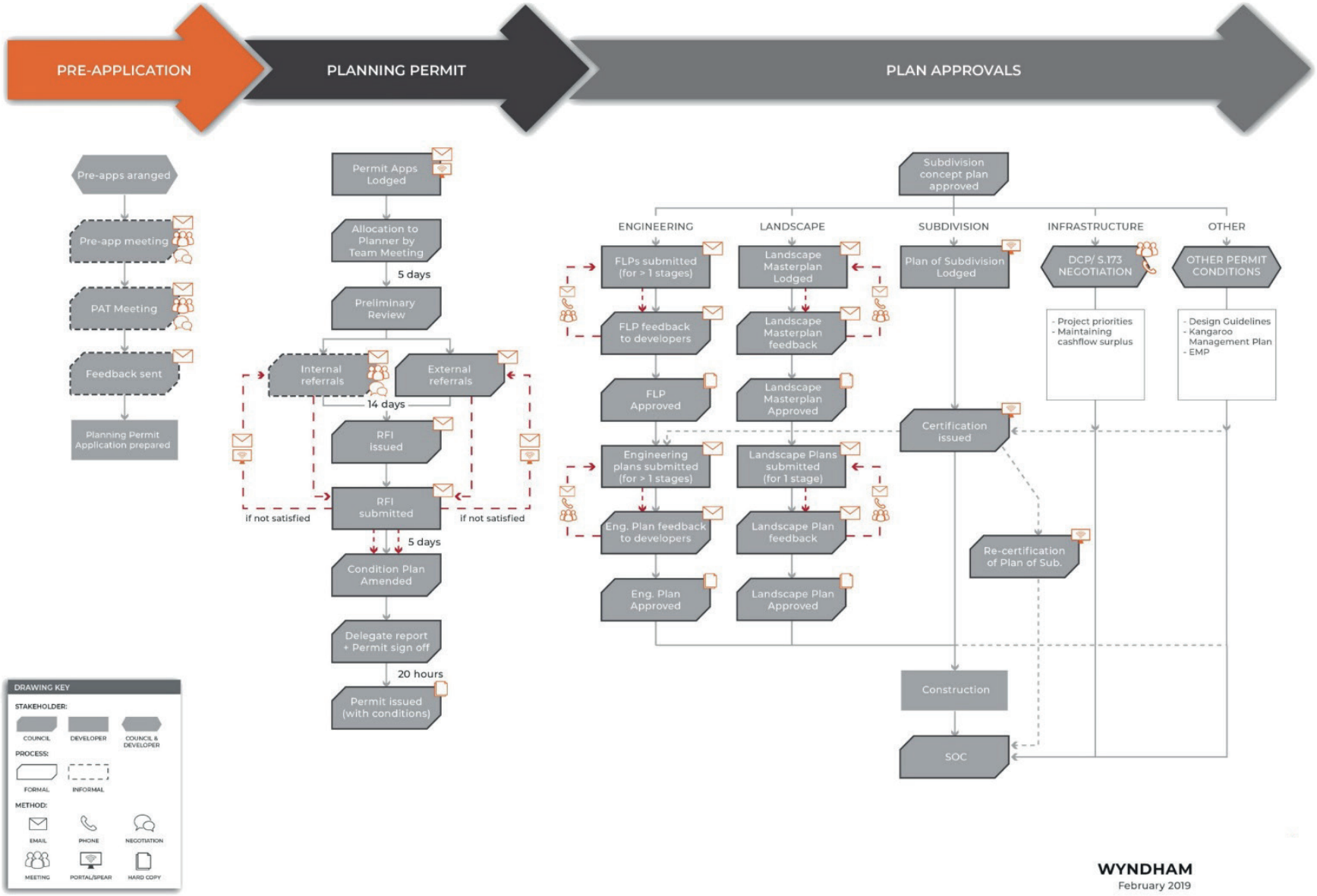

PRE-APPLICATION
PLANNING PERMIT
PLAN APPROVALS
Pre-apps aranged
Pre-app meeting
Feedback sent
Planning Permit Application prepared
Permit Apps Lodged
Preliminary Review
Allocation by Team Meeting
5 - 10 days
Internal referrals
External referrals
PAT Meeting
5 days
14 days
Allocated Planner
RFI issued
RFI submitted
if not satisfied
if not satisfied
Delegate report + Permit sign off
2 - 3 days
Permit issued (with conditions)
Subdivision concept plan approved
ENGINEERING
LANDSCAPE
SUBDIVISION
INFRASTRUCTURE
OTHER
FLPs submitted (for > 1 stages)
FLP feedback to developers
FLP Approved
Engineering plans submitted (for > 1 stages)
Eng. Plan feedback to developers
Eng. Plan Approved
Landscape Masterplan Lodged
Landscape Masterplan feedback
Landscape Masterplan Approved
Landscape Plans submitted (for 1 stage)
Landscape Plan feedback
Landscape Plan Approved
Plan of Subdivision Lodged
Certification issued
Re-certification of Plan of Sub.
Construction
SOC
DCP/ S.173 NEGOTIATION
- Financial
- Quality
- Timing
- Demand
- Significance
OTHER PERMIT CONDITIONS
- Design Guidelines
- Kangaroo Management Plan
- EMP
DRAWING KEY
STAKEHOLDER:
COUNCIL
DEVELOPER
COUNCIL & DEVELOPER
PROCESS:
FORMAL
INFORMAL
METHOD:
EMAIL
PHONE
NEGOTIATION
MEETING
PORTAL/SPEAR
HARD COPY
WHITTLESEA
February 2019


PRE-APPLICATION
PLANNING PERMIT
PLAN APPROVALS
Pre-apps aranged
Pre-app meeting
PAT Meeting
Feedback sent
Planning Permit Application prepared
Permit Apps Lodged
Allocation to Planner by Team Meeting
5 days
Preliminary Review
Internal referrals
External referrals
14 days
RFI issued
RFI submitted
if not satisfied
if not satisfied
5 days
Condition Plan Amended
Delegate report + Permit sign off
20 hours
Permit issued (with conditions)
Subdivision concept plan approved
ENGINEERING
LANDSCAPE
SUBDIVISION
INFRASTRUCTURE
OTHER
FLPs submitted (for > 1 stages)
FLP feedback to developers
FLP Approved
Engineering plans submitted (for > 1 stages)
Eng. Plan feedback to developers
Eng. Plan Approved
Landscape Masterplan Lodged
Landscape Masterplan feedback
Landscape Masterplan Approved
Landscape Plans submitted (for 1 stage)
Landscape Plan feedback
Landscape Plan Approved
Plan of Subdivision Lodged
Certification issued
Re-certification of Plan of Sub.
Construction
SOC
DCP/ S.173 NEGOTIATION
- Project priorities
- Maintaining cashflow surplus
OTHER PERMIT CONDITIONS
- Design Guidelines
- Kangaroo Management Plan
- EMP
DRAWING KEY
STAKEHOLDER:
COUNCIL
DEVELOPER
COUNCIL & DEVELOPER
PROCESS:
FORMAL
INFORMAL
METHOD:
EMAIL
PHONE
NEGOTIATION
MEETING
PORTAL/SPEAR
HARD COPY
WYNDHAM
February 2019

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APPENDIX 3: INDUSTRY FEEDBACK

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Pre Application Process	What are your reasons for being satisfied or unsatisfied with this process?	This process was sufficient at this Council, but they did not go above and beyond to provide critical feedback that could speed planning permit process in the long term. Neutral position based minimal involvement No response from Council on areas of uncertainty. Constant change of staff has required differing views to be satisfied, sometimes contradictory in nature. Lack of consistency has cost much time. Process typically undertaken by others for this part of the project, therefore I'm not in a position to judge the pre-app process.	Slow turnaround times for issuance of planning permit. Whilst it would have been good to have been able to organise sooner [PSP approval], it was a thorough meeting with all council's key stakeholders present. On the downside, and at the outset there appeared to be a rigid adherence to Council policy and the PSP and an unwillingness to consider alternative approaches to what might be considered, generally in accordance. This stance later softened. Generally prompt access to meetings and key staff feedback, however advice was very conservative in early interactions. Most issues were identified early and the officers who were involved were those generally allocated	1. No clear guidance / feedback provided at meetings. 2. Officers unable to provide a view / direction about what was required during meetings. no real feedback on what would be required for an approval No commitments are made for timing in the pre-application process, especially for employment led projects. There is very little comment made at the time. All issues are identified late in the application process. There is little exercise of discretion to achieve objectives. Generally good at setting up a pre application meeting in a timely manner. Sometimes issues with getting a	On the whole, we found the pre-application access to key officers from most departments (at pre-application meetings) to be satisfactory. Our interface at pre-application stage was in respect to a ghost permit application process. We found the lack of a finalised PSP in some cases to be problematic in terms of Council providing a definitive position on various elements of the proposal, however this is understandable. We were also able to establish monthly project team meetings from the ghost permit application stage which was very helpful. Set up bimonthly meetings to engage all critical personnel	The first request was ignored (3 years ago) despite formal requests. Subsequent pre-app meetings (in the last two years) have proven to be beneficial. We commend Wyndham Planning on their pre-application meeting process, having been offered access to a multi-department pre-application working group in respect to our proposal. There was a delay in terms of when we received the written feedback from that meeting, but we commend Wyndham Planning again for providing us with written feedback on our initial concept. However, there is an inflexibility by Council officers (or perhaps a	Some improvement recently but previously discussions were indecisive and failed to provide guidance. Council willing to meet to discuss the pre-application and the vision etc… Was hard to get a meeting. Agreements at the meeting did not flow through to the permit approval process (upon permit application lodgement). Consideration discussed at Pre-App mtgs were not considered at permit assessment.	Council Officers have been proactive in the pre-application process. Working with developers to get positive outcomes for all parties.

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
			the applications. Council welcomed the idea of pre-application meeting and therefore a start to the process to come. They are now willing to have any constructive conversations. Very thorough pre-app process with quality feedback.	written response and/or follow-up to key issues raised in the meeting. Extremely slow process, requests made beyond Councils authority.	for the life of the project. Generally meetings can be set up on short notice. Relevant staff usually attend. Written comments post-meeting are provided quickly. Management of Major Developments Unit has been rather poor. Lack of experienced staff making important decisions.	perception by officers that they are unable to exercise flexibility) to support propositions that are not strictly in accordance with PSP or other Council guidance. Over a 5 month period we have been attempting to work collaboratively with Council to come to agreement on a concept before committing to documenting and lodging a permit application. We have received good service from the planning team however they do not appear to have the ability to 'filter' all comments from internal teams and prepare an 'on balance' pre-application response. Timing to arrange meeting. Low level of pre-preparation for the meeting,		

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
						making the meeting quite useless. Pre-application feedback was generally very negative and conservative from an engineering base. Planners lack ownership of the process. Key issues that were discussed / resolved at pre-application process are brought up again during application process. Adhere to timelines well as per the agreed MOU Developer's agreement. Pre-application meeting was poorly attended by Council officers and outcomes of the meeting didn't translate to improve permit assessment outcomes.		

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Further Information Requests	What are your reasons for being satisified or unsatsified with this process?	Council has often lost information previously provided in response to questions raised; their document management system doe snot appear to be fail safe. It is no better or worse than similarly located Councils. RFI was succinct and to the point. However some items could have been addressed via conditions of the permit. Was generally good. Council planners lack understanding of the delivery phase of a subdivision project and have lost the art of determining whether a plan of subdivision (or similar) is generally in accordance with an Endorsed Plan. Relative accuracies of different types of plans (i.e. survey v urban design) are not well understood by Cardinia Council thereby exacerbating the problem. The Council abuses the RFI process. It generally does not seek further information but seeks to force changes to the application.	RFI's in terms of traffic issues are usually reasonable. The process is fine, but the RFI's come out of the blue after multiple efforts to engage with the planners. Very conservative approach to RFI's. Requested information that was not necessary for decision making. Further information requests were not unreasonably in most cases. The team at Council are willing to take calls or call back to discuss any further information requests etc... fter clarifying what was required for the Wetland masterplan - council then came back at the 11th hour with other requests.	We have found the RFI process to be highly iterative, requiring multiple responses to deal with the RFI issue(s), and in some cases new issues being introduced part way through this iterative process. In some cases also, Council departments varied the level or type of information required to satisfy issues. Our observation is that the considerable delays caused are less attributable to the Planning Department, but more about the internal referral process itself - (in)consistency of personnel involved, lack of an integrated approach to obtaining internal referral comments from all internal teams and synthesising these	Highly iterative - internal departments often having several goes at their RFI response (introducing new issues in some cases and introducing new information requirements for the same issue in others). The internal referral process had a tendency to be delayed on account of high workload issues or gaining access to the specific officer required to make comment. Timeliness of RFI response is good. However, lot of room for improvement in how the response is drafted. Seems that it is simply a copy/paste of internal department comments, and the Planning Department has not critically evaluated	More than once the Further Information requested has been specifically responded to / outcome agreed in previous discussions / RFIs. We've even had comments in two separate RFIs contradicting each other. speed of issuing RFI. Feedback was generally very negative and conservative from an engineering base. Tail waging the dog. Planners failed to take ownership of the process, in particular referral feedback which dumped comments without consideration of a whole of Council position. This has improved, however, in the past 12months. Has been some flaws in how many	We were satisfied with the willingness of the planning department to be open-minded about the particular nuances of our application, and their ability to effectively liaise with DELWP to agree a sensible interpretation of the PSP/ Planning Scheme controls applicable to our proposal. We did experience some delays however in the assessment of the application (including initially missing external referrals, and associated with the application changing hands within the planning department) which created some delays. Ridiculous requests for completely irrelevant analysis. Overly long and prescriptive and required information	

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
				into a single comprehensive RFI request, and a perception that the Planning team are not enabled to 'filter' RFI requests and prepare an 'on balance' RFI response. We also perceive a lack of resources across the board which results in delays in terms of capacity to deal with workloads. 1. RFIs responses provided well beyond statutory timeframes 2. Lack of proper assessment of application material prior to issuing RFI letters. In some cases, the information being sought was included at the time the application was lodged. 3. Planners lack basic communication skills and in many cases a phone call to the applicant	to ensure consistency between department comments. Often comments between departments conflict, and there is no overall guidance from Planning on how to resolve these. Stock standard. A lot of copy and paste in RFI Letters that end up in 3-4 pages due to duplication and lack of internal department comment review which can be often be reduced by 50%. Planning team needs to manage comments from other internal departments. Ultimately they make planning decisions not engineering etc.	RFI's occur and the time lapse within each round of RFI. MOU process has been because it has brought this to the surface and it should be noted that Council have been responsive and open to improvement in this area. Experienced an inexperienced planner who doesn't understand the complexities of the Growth Areas and issued four additional informal FIRs after issuing a formal FIR. Additional FIRs could have been avoided if officer understood Growth Area planning better and had the skillset to make decisions for himself, instead of referring minor issues to internal departments. - RFI's are usually late, and can seem	that had been lodged with the application. Recevied comments but took much longer to receive from Council - could be based on how much changes are being proposed vs. the PSP. RFI process was overly detailed (ie. could have been resolved at detailed engineering phase). Shows council are avoiding making decisions in relation to permit approvals. Unnecessary requests for detail a planning permit stage.	

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
				would suffice avoiding the need for sending unnecessary correspondence. RFI's came through at different times and were not often co-ordinated. Items requested have often been previously provided or are not required for assessment. Extremely slow & tedious info. requested.		motivated as a "stalling technique" rather than an actual wish to engage with the applicant or to find out further information - RFI requests are often for data that is irrelevant or not required for the application.		

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Permit Assessment Process	What are your reasons for being satisified or unsatsified with this process?	Lack of consistency in requirements between stages; largely due to high turn over of staff; lack of staff experience means they don't often understand what is being provided to them. A long length of time between responding to the RFI and any further communication with Council. too slow Our experience suggests that Cardinia could do a lot better with the detail. It appears that some decisions that are made are made on an unknown basis and when challenged it appears that at times they are not willing to listen to reason.	Took far too long to issue a planning permit for a site that already had an approved PSP. The process took a fair while and it seemed that there was an effective veto power available to departments within council without an ability for the planner responsible to put a balanced position. This applied mostly to the rigid approach of the open space planners. That said the planner assigned to the application did a more than reasonable job of setting timelines for responses etc which were adhered to. slow to issue permit unreasonable permit conditions not completely transparent through process. No better or worse than Cardinia, Wyndham etc Generally worked well with open dialogue	1. No streamlined process available for large / complex subdivision and / or use and developments that deliver employment / economic development opportunities. 2. Internal referral processes appear to be functioning poorly and compound the delay in approval timeframes. 3. Overly conservative approach to "generally in accordance" test if applications lodged show any minor variances to approved development plans / . PSPs. A robust pre-application process would capture any issues surrounding this issues. Very long permit assessment periods; long and iterative RFI processes with a	Long assessment period; long and onerous requirements to respond to matters of design preference (rather than in connection with matters of non-compliance with the PSP or Planning Scheme), including issues put in writing as an RFI response, but which were not expressed at regular project meetings, resulting in misinterpretation and delays. Difficulty accessing internal department officers to deal with comments direct. We have found the planners to be on the whole as responsive as they could be, within resourcing constraints, but the overall process to be frustratingly slow for our clients. Very responsive, very reasonable and have an	efficiency overly strict alignment with rules without accounting for actual site context. Permit approval process rarely met timeline expectations. Planners lacked ownership of referrals and determining the Council position where there was conflict. External referral's rarely were received on time and draft permit conditions were issued without some internal comments. in the past a lack of RFI, or multiple rounds of comments sent through informally via email without being collated/reviewed by PLanning. This has changed recently however. Significant time spent negoitating draft conditions on	Whittlesea put the same permit conditions on all landholders within the same precinct, making it virtually impossible to progress development in an equitable and logical fashion. Depends on the officer. Some are good and others draw out the process unnecessarily. Ghost Planning Permit Application Process - allowing assessment to occur while many other variables are still tbc. They can be slow in assessing secondary applications. Difficult to get a meeting (after lodgement) to discuss RFI and council's requirements.	Council keeps you informed of where the applications is at. is happy to provided draft conditions and discuss them. Have had been on time with issuing the permits.

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
			with the planner. While were targeted and generally expectations were met. A proactive and pragmatic approach has been taken by planners. In some cases this has required resolution of inconsistency between Council departments. Time delays in responsiveness. We recieved a planning permit for a MDS in less thanr 3months from lodgement. They are very slow to issue permits, they are not willing to discuss any conditions. Generally good service within reasonable timeframes.	lack of certainty as to internal assessment timeframes; difficulty or deterrence from contacting internal department officers directly (whilst having one point of contact, being the planning officer, is always preferable, when delays start to occur with internal referral responses or there are subtleties around technical maters that could benefit from face time with internal department officers, this is not easily facilitated or encouraged). We have found the planners to be on the whole as responsive as they could be, within resourcing constraints, but the overall process to be frustratingly slow for our clients. Timing of the approval is an issue	attitude that we're working together to improve the Melton Council community. Good dialogue with officers during the process to resolve issues without delay. Generally staff are customer service focused, good at responding to queries and providing updates. and proactive on trying to resolve issues. Lack of resourcing = slow response times. Beyond 60 stat days on 70% applications.	issues that are more appropaitely resovled at detailed engineering design phase. Council planners unwilling to negotiate with / override Council's engineers who seem to hold most power.		

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
				with some applications taking up to 9 months from submission. The Statutory Planning section is hamstrung by Strategic Planning, who have too much input into details that Statutory Planning should be easily capable of considering. Engineering influence on decisions is too rigid and stifles good design outcomes. Lack of communication from assessment officer- responsiveness to emails/voicemails/calls. Large time gap between review of draft conditions and issue of permit. Extremely slow & unnecessary conditions.				

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Plan Certification Process	What are your reasons for being satisified or unsatsified with this process?	Due to the part time nature of the subdivision officers and apparent lack of hand over between them, means everything takes longer than it should. Last stage of a relatively long running project. Some hiccups as usual but we got there in the end. They Council employs part time staff and deadlines are not met due to absence of assigned staff. The individuals within the subdivision section are fantastic. It appears however internal communication at Cardinia is sometimes lacking. We find we have to provide the subdivision sections with documents issued by other Council departments. The subdivision officers also need to be given the ability to actually make a decision on certification issues. Too often the subdivision officers defer to the planners on even very basic issues.	At times this process was very slow. Better than most and usually goes smoothly. Unreasonable certification requirements i.e. s173 agreements registered prior to cert. Can take months to get street addressing completed. Happy with the timeframes for certification, and Council's willingness to follow up where the hold ups are and work with you to resolve them. They are slow to action certification. This process seems to work quite well and we've had difficult road blocks to get around - including a lot cap.	This is a question better answered by project surveyors, however typically the issue has been workload/ backlog related, resulting in delays. Vast improvement in the last 12months however prior 2 years timing of process took way too long and team under-resourced. Previous contract subdivision officer was extremely efficient. This is not the case for permanent staff. Good at updating SPEAR conditions outstanding.	Great processes despite lack of staff. Need more staff to cope with increasing number of development fronts.	Council can take a long time (despite no outstanding issues), but to Council's credit they haven't let this delay the development process. Comes through in a timely manner. No urgency to certify plans within the statutory timeframes. - Certification process can be very slow compared to other Councils - Internal referrals are frustrating: * Can be unaware that they have been referred to, thus taking 3-6 months to respond * Can not know the difference between Certification and SOC * Can not understand that Certification is required to start construction - Engineering Department in particular is	Referrals responses are taking too long which delays certification etc.. Have been very helpful is resolving issued with conditions so SOC could be issued. Requesting info. that shouldn't be on Plans of Sub & not allowing info. that should.	Keep you informed of the status and deal with issue preventing certification proactively.

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
						frustrating, stalling certification approvals despite the fact that they also have approval over Engineering Plans - so they already have a process to not allow construction to start - Danielle Kos is a good point of contact, helpful, friendly, reasonable - Annette Monk is uncommunicative. Certification by Annette can take up to 5-7 business days following all referral consents being received. - Street Addressing by Rates Department takes too long. This needs to be done quickly after referral, rather than wait until just before Certification, in order to allow Subdivisions to Certify straight off the bat.		

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Engineering Plans Approval Process	What are your reasons for being satisified or unsatsified with this process?	Council has changed Council approved drawings after construction works have been well advanced meaning extensive variations and time delays have been incurred; i.e. 12 months added to 6 month contracts. This is now resulting in dispute with the contractor. Also the opinion received will vary depending on who you speak with and how experienced they are. No better or worse than other Councils. Last stage only of a multi stage project. Council uses engineering planning approval to introduce new requirements.	Casey's engineering department seem to be the highest functioning department we deal with in the delivery of our large land development. Generally smooth process. Engineering department provides comments without certification of the POS, so we can amend post first round comments and re-submitt for approvals. Formal approvals occur 2-3 days after the certification of the POS occurs which is excellent. Allows us to tender, award and have confidence that plans will not change all that much. In general the plan approval process works ok. However they can slow to respond or not willing to discuss alternatives. Very little coordination with other	The number of submissions requirements for changes to plans is excessive - 3-6 months on avg. An FLP approval process as a condition 1 on subdivision approvals would reduce this timeframe. Approval timing could be improved. Requests to make amendments often inconsistent between stages. Very slow, uncommunicative and push everything through he planner who can't respond appropriately to technical questions. Extremely slow & unnecessary requests made.	By far the quickest Council to turnaround comments and approvals for intersection / road design. Strong customer focus. Melton CC recognise that new development is driving the growth of the municipality for all. Council officers treat developers as landowners too (which they are). This is a welcome change from the adversarial approach experienced in other municipalities.	Council has made considerable effort over the last year to improve their processes / timliness. inaccessible people for telephont enquiries Very slow response times. Council are keeping to the agreed time frames set out within the MOU reasonably well. Senior engineer unwilling to relinquish control of approvals. Subordinate engineers operate in an environment of fear to approve anything without the senior engineer's approval, resulting in one giant bottleneck. - Stan Peska is a bottle-neck. A better process needs to be put in place rather than have once "czar" of Engineering for compliance	Illogical comments that suggest they don't have the expertise to assess plans. Depends on the officers involved. Usually requires multiple submissions and inconsistent advice. Significant delays. It depends on which subdivision officer gets allocated your plans how well the approval process goes and how quickly matters get addressed. Extremely slow (the slowest I ever experienced), inconsistent with standards, tedious detail of no consequence to final outcome.	Assess plans in a timely manner and are willing to discuss matters

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
			departments. This area seems to work quite well - there aren't usually many hold ups.			approvals, who knows everything that is going on but is so stretched thin that he doesn't answer the phone or respond to emails. - Engineering approvals at the front end (Abul) is generally better, but also can be slow. - The developer "fast track" process, of paying more for a quicker approval process, is unfair and inequitable. Government Authorities should treat all parties equally, not provide better service for those who have more money.		

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Landscape Plans Approval Process	What are your reasons for being satisified or unsatsified with this process?	I have not been do directly involved but from a client perspective, it appears to have taken too long. The approval process is slow. Council requires landscaping beyond the site.		Greater transparency from officers regarding landscape standards / requirements early in the approvals process Resistance to vary from approved PSPs / strategic documents despite greater opportunities for nett community with additional open space areas Maintenance cost driven approach to landscape concepts approvals despite agreed urban design principles in planning documents. Greater need to embrace innovation of landscape design concepts. Streetscape approvals are not an issue. Park approvals can be difficult due to limitations on scope and budget. Landscape approvals are	Unreasonable landscape/ urban design requirements with no policy backing = huge delays and conflicts.	No issues from a processing perspective, timliness of responses is good. Positive recent engagement. Fairly neutral in this area. - It is generally smooth and simple	Usually ok but Whittlesea standards for tree protection zones generally cause issues. Can be slow to assess plans.	Unable to get responses from them. Takes an extremely long time to get approvals through.

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
				limited by species. Not always timely consideration of plans.				
Environmental Management Plans Process	What are your reasons for being satisified or unsatsified with this process?		There is a point of contact at Council that can assist in progressing approvals internally. Timeframes are great.	There is a tendency to "gold plate" EMPs but overall the experience has been good. vast improvement in approvals in recent 6 months Extremely slow & unnecessary requests made.	Good turn around timeframes and reasonable feedback.	timliness of responses poor 1-2 years ago. Improvements have been made, but this section seems to be remote from the engineering department and there is a disjoint between approvals of the two depts. No accountability on timeframes. 6 months to get an EMP approved is a dereliction of duty by WCC. This reflects a poor standard of resourcing in Council towards this.	Getting responses to EMP is extremely slow, this can delay works.	

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Statement of Compliance Process	What are your reasons for being satisified or unsatsified with this process?	Last stage of a development and everything had to be wrapped up in terms of compliance with all permit conditions and was something of a painful process but it went well enough. Council does not appear to be proactively managing external authorities and it should take a much more proactive approach to managing referral authorities for the SOC process. Slow process Short staffed or part time, but result no staff to deal with SOC.	The Council officers are very quick to issue SOC. Generally very quick turnaround. Excellent, willing to discuss outstanding matters which makes the process realistic and once all satisfied its a reasonable timeframe to getting SOC issued 3-4days or less. In general the team is responsive and understands the urgency of Developers requiring the SOC as soon as all conditions have been meet. This area seems to work quite well - no further comments to add.	Vast improvement in the past 12 months with service and efficiency. Previous 2 years were a challenge. Previous contract subdivision officer was very efficient. This is not the case for other officers. Do not provide contribution amounts until all works are completed & tend to request contributions for future stages.	Good timeframes and make reasonable decisions.	The internal process at Council could do with streamlining. It seems a little old school, with the subdivisions team having to physically track down internal parties to consent. The process has been running smoothly. SPEAR team are well organised, responsive and have a strong customer focus. Stan Peska is a bottleneck. Delegation of regions to other staff members is required.	They are responsive and understand the urgency of issuing SOC in a timely manner. Tedious.	Quick to issue SOC when conditions have been meet.
Which steps do you consider create the geratest unnecessary delays? (Tick up to 3).	Pre Application Process	2	2	2	1	2	2	

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
	From application lodgement to further information request	6	8	4	2	4	7	
	From lodgement of further information to issue of a planning permit	9	8	7	2	5	7	
	Certification of plan of subdivsion process	0	3	1	0	1	0	
	Engineering plan approvals	4	4	4	0	3	5	
	Landscape masterplan approvals	0	3	0	2	0	1	1
	Development/Infrastrucut re contributions negotiations	2	7	3	0	4	4	
	Statement of compliance process	3	1	1	0	2	1	
	External referral authority responses	2	4	3	3	3	1	1
	Other (please specify)	1	0	2	1	0	1	

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
	What are the reasons for giving this answer?	The reasons have been outlined in my earlier responses. Council do not recognise legislated timelines, but rather get to your application at the indivual employees leisure. Excessive use of s173 Agreements in conditions and DCP. Excessive bonds and security. Council forces DCP/Council responsibility onto developer and other unfair conditions, delays approvals for so long that they trust that developer is under such time pressure that no appeal to VCAT. Lag in feedback from Council in response to the RFI revision. My experiences in submission of permit applications as a planning consutlant.						

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
Do you have any further comments?		Construct DCP items in a timely manner by direct management. Accredit private planning firms and after in principle approval of land subdivision, allow accredited firm to complete process. Do not use s173 to enforce permit conditions. Revise PSPs urgently to get correct framework for planning permits. PSP - Council were disengaged in the PS process once it was handed over to the VPA. This was disappointing. Council needs to colloborate with developers to avoid high number of rather minor VCAT cases in PSP sites.	Casey are reasonably good at handling growth area Planning Permits, particularly when compared to other municipalities. Recent experience has been really positive. Out sources the assessment of applications to a panel of qualified consultants to speed up the process. Allow the planner ultimate say over an approval - if a consistence approach cannot be achieved through all required departments. This should ensure ease of approvals. More staff to be employed within the landscape department. Growth Area team needs to project manage estates with other ancillary teams internally and make decisions in unison. Lack of communication between internal departments can be	Ability to accept electronic submissions of information (at present the system requires hard copies to be sent so that they can be manually allocated a receipt/ reference number before being sent to the Planning Department. Also, the Planning Department is unable to accept/ open weblinks, meaning information packages beyond a very small size limit cannot be opened by Planners (instead Council's IT unit needs to open and then internally send back this information to the Planners). They need to be more responsive. At the moment the only way to get an answer is to organise a meeting with them.	Of all the growth areas, Melton are currently the best to deal with, competent, responsive and appear to be reasonably resourced. Experience of key staff can be lacking, particularly in negotiation of DCP issues and resolving issues internally between departments. Major Developments Team needs manage comments/ feedback from internal departments and filter everything before forwarding to Developers.	Wyndham should continue with the streamlining they have embarked on. Continue functional improvements to SPEAR; consolidate 'cradle to grave' departments under one umbrella (ie SEMP, TMP, Construction); continue eng approval improvements and communication with industry. The introduction of their own road network plan for Tarneit Nth which is contrary to the gazetted PSP, is ridiculous and slows everything down unnecessarily. Continuity of growth area staff and greater senior planning involvement in the decision making process with applicants so that adequate debate can occur.	Develop a plan for how infrastructure in the growth areas could be developed and facilitate avenues for developers to make it happen. Insisting that $5million projects are delivered prior to development of the first lot on land that is outside of the developers land holdings is not a reasonable response. More staff review and better response times for some officers. More resources internally. Assess all properties (& applications) evenly & on their merits, not just based upon which properties council would like to see developed first. Council has a responsibility to the PSP outcomes, however, their actions do not	

		Cardinia	Casey	Hume	Melton	Wyndham	Whittlesea	Mitchell
			resolved with good internal processes.	Statutory planners need to be decision makers and resolve issues across the organisation instead of being dominated by other internal groups. The current situation leads to uncertainty and little guiding advice throughout the process. The culture of customer service is lacking - simple things like returning a call / email in a timely manner would make a big difference. Strict performance standards for statutory planners. Speed up assessment & reduce permit conditions.		Greater collaboration and transparency with Developer's as to where the DCP's are spent and the timing of this.Stick to the statutory approval timeframes under the Subdivision Act without seeking further funding from developers.	reflect this. Reduce staff turnover, number of permit conditions and deal with applications within statutory timeframes.	

APPENDIX 4: PLAN APPROVAL TIMEFRAMES

Figure 23 Subdivision Concept Plans Timeframes

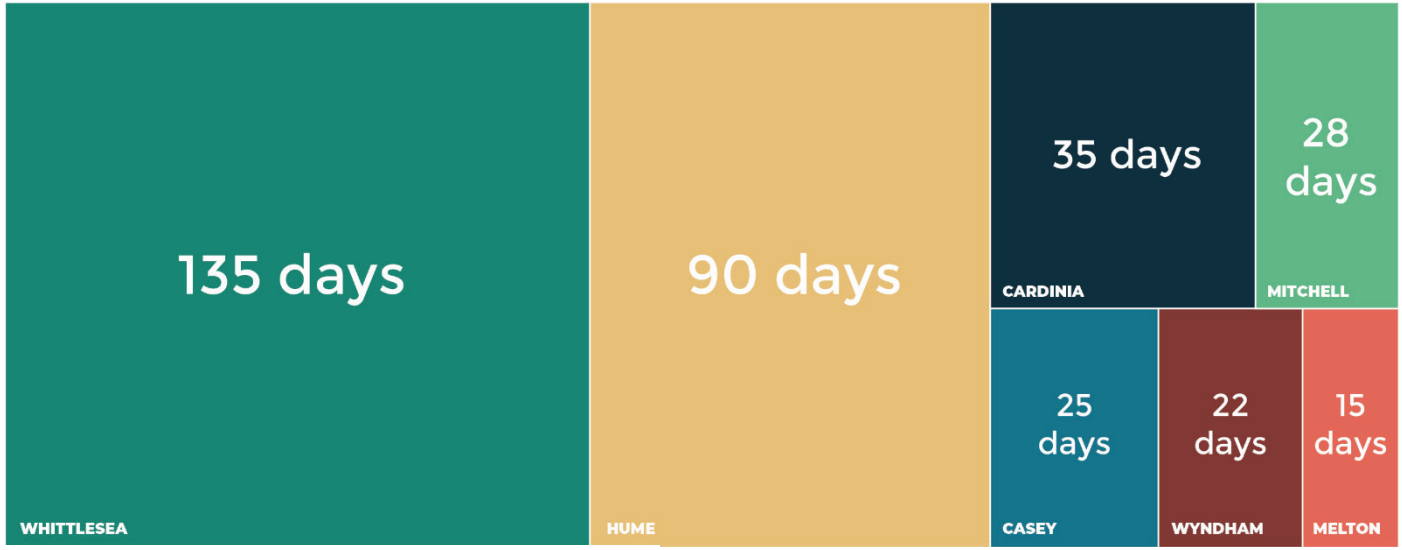

Figure 24 Engineering Construction Plans Timeframes

Figure 25 Landcsape Plans Timeframes

APPENDIX 5: SUMMARY OF MATERIAL PROVIDED BY COUNCILS

SUMMARY

Council	Organisational Structure	Technology	Permits	DCP's + Infrastructure	Planning Guidelines and Templates	Policies / Procedures	Service / Process Reviews
Cardinia	• Dedicated Growth Area Planning team Other departments involved: • Strategic Planning, Administration	• Trapeze has the feature Lightbox • HPRM: Content Manager • OpenOffice • SPEAR	• Delegate report template (uses plans) • Standard permit conditions • Subdivision permit template • Draft growth area planning conditions template	• PIP Template • DCP process flowchart	• Building Design Guidelines and Title Restrictions	• Development Contributions Process Overview (flow chart)	• DCP Review 2018-ongoing (Streamlining for Growth funding)
Casey	• Dedicated Growth Area Planning team Other departments involved: Statutory Planning x 3 teams, Development Services, Municipal Building Surveyor, Subdivisions & Development Engineers, Planning Compliance	• Techone • Property and Rating • Inhouse Lodgement Portal		• Development Contribution Plan Rates webpage • Managing funding for growth areas		• Fee-for-service planning system officer report	• LEAN Process and Service Review (Statutory Planning + Engineering) • Statutory Planning report by New Focus • Continuous Improvement – Statutory Planning profile • Planning committee meeting for continuous improvement • Planning Pressure Points
Hume	• Dedicated Growth Area Planning Team (located in the statutory planning and building control services department) • Other departments involved: • Subdivisional development, Statutory Planning, Municipal		• Planning Permit • Delegate Report	• GAIPC Decision Matrix • VPA Streamline questions (related to DCP's)	Nil	• Operational Procedures Manual (for planning)	• PENDING: Service Review + Internal Audit

Council	Organisational Structure	Technology	Permits	DCP's + Infrastructure	Planning Guidelines and Templates	Policies / Procedures	Service / Process Reviews
	Building Surveyor, Statutory Planning and Administration						
Melton			• Excel table showing the NDA of their PSPs	• DCP dashboard • DCP Administration guidelines • Adopted DC policy • PIP template • DCP schedule template (focusses on the economics of DCPs)			• Process + Service Review of Planning • PENDING: DCP/ICP Process Review (recently awarded) • Urbis PSP Population Forecasts • Planning services review by Votar
Mitchell	• No dedicated growth area planning team		• Planning permit conditions • Delegate report • Signed delegate report	• WIK template • PIP template			Nil
Whittlesea	•	• Authority • Sharepoint • Trapeze • SPEAR • Outlook	• Delegate report • Subdivisions conditions			• PAT process flowchart • Ghost permit process • Draft conditions information sheet • Draft pre-app models • GADA process guide	• Process Review (no report output)
Wyndham	• Dedicated growth area planning team • Other departments involved: • Town Planning (Established Areas), Landscaping, Engineering Planning, Engineering Development, Coordinator Building Services	•	•	• DCP PIP report	•	• Engineering subdivision approvals process • Permit process paperless • Subdivision processing new SPEAR • Referring a SPEAR application process • Certification of a plan in SPEAR process	• Planning Health Audit and Review 2015 • Planning Applicant Survey 2014 • Planning Applicant survey 2015

Council	Organisational Structure	Technology	Permits	DCP's + Infrastructure	Planning Guidelines and Templates	Policies / Procedures	Service / Process Reviews
						• Issuing SOC in SPEAR process • Subdivision managing estate permit conditions process	

CARDINIA

Building Design Guidelines and Title Restriction Template Current

All new estates within the Cardinia Growth Area are required to provide a response to the Building and Design Guidelines (BDG). These guidelines set out the council's design principles for buildings in these emerging areas, which are reflective of the neighbourhood character they want to achieve.

This document is not the BDG, but rather is used to inform the writing against this code for new residential estates. It steps through the process with sections on: achieving compliance with the 5 requirements, additional BDG controls of a higher quality to improve an application, elements with merit not covered in the BDG and guidelines for applying title restrictions.

PIP template

Public Infrastructure Plans (PIP) are important, comprehensive documents covering all aspects of infrastructure delivery required because of development or subdivision. They are required for most developments within Cardinia's growth areas. This template is intended to aid in the writing of a PIP. It is not an exhaustive resource.

Planning Permit Delegate Report

An example delegate report for a real application received at Council.

This delegate report seems to be well balanced between summarising the work and context of the application to date, and making recommendations to ensure that the application continues to move forward. It includes a summary table of the position given by all external and internal referrals, which is useful, and then a summary of the assessment against the bigger sections of the PSP. The second half of the report is a list of draft conditions that feels proactive.

Draft Subdivision Permit

Is a working template for writing a subdivision permit.

Draft Growth Area Planning Conditions

Is a guide and template for staff when writing growth area planning permit conditions.

Cardinia Shire Council Organisational Chart

Comprehensive and covers through all the different arms of Council. Cardinia seem to have a standard employee hierarch that isn't weighted to far either way.

Development Contributions Process Overview

This is a flowchart outlining the steps involved in the Development Contributions Process from issuing a planning permit through to the Annual Land Revaluation and Developer Contribution Indexation.

CASEY

City of Casey Statutory Planning report prepared by New Focus

A report to investigate the level of satisfaction regarding parent services offered by the council, where gaps exist and improvements that could be made.

Has a section on the experience of statutory planning with this council, which generally found that respondents were satisfied with Casey's work. The volumes of respondents was low however, at 17.

Benefits Profile Template – Statutory Planning – Continuous Improvement

A template of potential initiatives that could improve some of the processes at Council. It outlines a brief description of what they area, the type of benefit (tangible or intangible), the measurement, priority and owner.

Brief for Planning Service Review 2018

A brief written tendering for a project to review the four arms of their planning and built form services.

Planning Committee meeting to report on decisions in planning applications

Since 2014 Council has been receiving more complex applications that are requiring more time to reach a planning decision. This is adversely impacting upon Councils timeframes.

During 2016/17, Council invested time into continuous improvements activities, going paperless and preparing for the new offices at Bunjil Place. The immediate result of this were planning delays, however these structural investments are beginning to come into fruition and Council is more comfortable with its position.

Organisational Chart

An organisational chart that goes through the job titles only of the statutory planning and building services division. Casey seem to have an evenly weighted hierarchy for these teams. They have divided their planning staff into four teams consisting of 3 x statutory planning teams and 1 x growth area planning and subdivision permits. This has helped to maintain the ratio of managers to staff.

Planning Pressure Points at Casey – June 2018

A high level discussion of the predictions for growth within Casey and the subsequent opportunities and challenges this presents.

The key themes it comes up with are: forecasting for growth, responding to developer pressure and growth area planning and infrastructure delivery. It aims to discuss each theme in some depth, identify some of the key opportunities and begin recommendations for ways to respond. It is written from the perspective of Council and acknowledges that brainstorming the viewpoints and impacts of Casey's growth from other actors is beyond its scope.

Officers' Reports – Update on Funding and Innovation Opportunities for Planning Services (2018)

This report investigated the potential for Casey to introduce a developer funded fee-for-service planning system within their PSP areas. This type of service is expected to generate approximately $750,000, which would be used to fund five new positions at Council focussing their attention to working with the developers under the MoU. Influenced by the model at Wyndham City Council, this program would enable Casey to provide their planning services at the level desired by industry.

On the 16th of October 2018, Council endorsed the first pilot model of this fee-for-service, by supporting offers executing this model within the Cardinia Creek South PSP and with five developers under a MOU. Since then, this model has widened to include one other developer, Stockland, also working with a MoU.

In a similar approach, two Project Control Groups have been established. The point of difference with the Project Control Group model is that they focus on multiple development projects around Casey rather than just within select PSP's. The aim of this project is to provide improved transparency of the work program across multiple developments, so both council and the developer are aware of the same upcoming milestones and priorities.

The recommendation of this report was that Council endorse Officers executing a fee for service model of delivery for planning services.

HUME

GAIPC Decision Matrix – LiK or WiK Requests

The purpose of the spreadsheet is to evaluate the merits of requests for WiK or LiK credits instead of DCP payments. The objective is to maximise value for council.

VPA streamline questions

Is a discussion of the DCP's at Council, with reference to the volumes they are receiving, some of the processes they have to manage it and other asides.

Planning Permit

A real planning permit issued by Council that is useful to get a gauge of their conditions usage.

Delegate Report

An example delegate report for a real application received at Council.

This delegate reports contains a lot of context setting for the application. It goes through many of the local policies and zones without assessment, then moves into a comprehensive assessment of the key planning issues with all the regulatory 'working out'. Following this is the detailed breakdown of the assessment against Clause 56, covering off points that both comply and don't. It refers to 'approval subject to conditions', but doesn't delve into any draft conditions.

Operational Procedures Manual – Statutory Planning Department 2013

This is an internal welcome guide written to aid new statutory planning staff. It takes a granulated view of council processes and describes in detail how to do both the day-to-day and rarer tasks of the role.

Organisational Structure Chart – Subdivisional Development

Outlines the structure and relationships of the subdivisions department. This chart shows the position title, employees name and employment terms (ie full time).

Hume seem to have a standard breakdown of manager to staff. A role of interest is the Subdivision Administration Officer, which sits between the Manager of Subdivisional Development and the four heads of subdivision.

Organisational Structure Chart – Strategic Planning

Outlines the structure and relationships of the strategic department. This chart shows the position title, employees name and employment terms (ie full time). This seems to be a standard team.

Organisational Structure Chart – Statutory Planning and Building Control Services

Outlines the structure and relationships of the statutory planning department. This chart shows the position title, employees name and employment terms (ie full time). This seems to be a standard hierarchy, with two statutory planning teams and one dedicated to growth area planning.

MELTON

PSP NDA

An excel chart showing the different PSP's in Melton and a breakdown of different components such as gross and net residential and employment hectares, number of households and population.

DCP Dashboard 2017 – 2018

An inhouse council dashboard that seems to be regularly refreshed to show WiK, DIL, NDA and SOC for different DCP's. It also shows what stage these projects are at.

Urbis – City of Melton Precinct Structure Plan Population Forecasts

A refresher to a 2015 population growth forecast for all the PSP areas within Melton. This study breaks down the population predictions for each PSP within Melton over the years 2017 – 2027. It also does a schools report to show where and when the greatest need for education facilities are predicted to be.

Development Contributions Plan Administration Guidelines (2013)

Sets out an overview of how DCP's operate within Melton. It discusses the roles and expectations of Council and very broadly the process for how they are implemented. It does outline Council's priorities and position when negotiating DCP's.

Adopted DC Policy

A policy outlining the responsibilities and ownership within the DCP process at Council.

Planning Service and Review by Votar

A review of the planning services offered by Melton City Council with a suite of recommendations to improve these. Some of the recommendations made were to better align resources, develop the internal culture and upskill, improve internal systems and improve processes. Umbrellaed within this are specific actions and timeframes.

Organisation chart for Engineering Services

This seems to be a very balanced team, growing evenly from the head of engineering with four tiers (1, 2, 4 then 15 employees).

Organisation chart for Finance

Similar to the engineering services team, the finance team seems quite balanced with up to four tiers of hierarchy spread amongst the divisions.

Organisational chart for the Planning Services Department

Similarly balanced to the above, with four tiers of hierarchy.

Public Infrastructure Plan Template

A simple word template used to manage the outcomes negotiated by each DCP. It shows the item, a description, who is responsible, the staging and comprehensive plans.

Development Contributions Schedule Template

An excel template used to manage the financial aspect of each DCP, by calculating how much each area is required to deliver. It covers the different charges per area, the rate per NDH, the DIL, any WiK, WiK Credit or Land Credit.

MITCHELL

Standard Planning Permit Conditions

A comprehensive document outlining how to write permit conditions following Mitchell Council's style.

Delegate Report

The front section of this delegate report outlines the relevant local planning policies, zones, particular provisions and clauses in a direct way, with little assessment. It then moves into discussion, choosing select themes to talk to and drawing in the relevant planning levers where appropriate. Potentially this means that some of the referenced particular provisions wouldn't have follow up. The back section of this report goes through the conditions they are predicting to use and their concluding comments. At the end of the report is an in-depth assessment against Clause 55 (Rescode) in the form of a table.

Signed Delegate Report

Similar format to the above, but with a permit recommended to be granted as the outcome (as opposed to a Notice of Decision to Grant a Permit).

WHITTLESEA

Delegate Report

Briefly outlines the relevant parts of the planning framework without assessment or much commentary, but simply flags them as triggers for permits. Following this is a large table that goes over the external and internal referrals that were contacted, their stance on the application and their stance on the outcome. It then moves into assessment, reaching an outcome and the list of Conditions that they would recommend.

Works in Kind s173 Template Review

Is a template for Council to follow when setting out their Works in Kind.

PIP Table Template for Planning Permit

An table template for Council to use when setting out their PIP requirements.

PAT meeting process flowchart

Details this process from the receipt of an application lodged at Council, to the referral to a lead planner to establish the PAT team, doing assessment before the meeting, having the meeting, making final comments, having the lead planner consolidate these comments and then distributing correspondence to the applicant.

PAT Process Terms of Engagement

Refreshed PAT process with updated timeframes and terms of agreement for the people involved. It now includes circulating draft comments 24 hours before the meeting and the policy for resubmissions.

Subdivision Conditions 11 January 2016

Is a working table that contains the changes to the standard subdivision conditions as well as the standard conditions list.

Ghost Permit Process Protocol (PSP's)

Outlines council's process for dealing with Ghost Applications for the benefit of the external industry. It practically discusses the steps in the process.

Draft Conditions Information Sheet

Councils policy as to why they make draft conditions available to the applicant prior to a permit being issued. It raises the benefits of involving the applicant in this stage to pick out unclear sections, but reinforces that the permit will be the final version.

Draft Pre-Application Models Internal Document Only October 2018

Is an internal document describing the different types of pre-applications that can be run at Council. The four main types of pre-app were defined as general, informal, digital and formal. These have different outcome expectations for the applicant and Council and different requirements before the meeting is held.

GADA Process Guide – Working Documents

Further detailed explanation on the processes that planners will use at Whittlesea throughout their role. Goes through the PAT process, matters that need to have Council called in and those that don't, subdivision referrals, FLP's, storage, email and permit.

WYNDHAM

Wyndham Health Check 2015

See the summary of this report below under the section 'Previous Service Reviews/Audits'

Wyndham Organisation Chart

A typical organisational chart with four tiers of staff. Some middle managers can be in charge of larger teams than others, for example in the planning department vs. the landscape architects, but this is likely reflective of the councils staffing needs.

DCP PIP Report

An annual update on the Wyndham North Development Contributions Plan Project Implementation Project (DCP PIP). It goes through the context of the DCP area by showing the predicted growth in housing, and then what infrastructure will be required to sustain this. It steps through each infrastructure project and its priority within this DCP, as well as continuing a discussion about how each of these priorities are being met.

Engineering Subdivision Approvals Process

A flowchart detailing the Council's process from receiving a Functional Layout Plan through to returning the maintenance bond.

Permit Process Paperless

A flowchart detailing the paperless process Council go through from receipt of a planning application through to granting a permit decision.

Subdivision Processing New SPEAR Applications

A flowchart detailing the subdivision process for when a new SPEAR application is received, through to accepting the application. Interestingly in step 2.0 of the process, the outcome is the same for whether the application has been lodged or not into the internal systems.

Survey Letter

A copy of the letter sent to recent planning applicants that was seeking feedback on their experience with Council's planning department.

Referring a SPEAR Application Process

A flowchart detailing the process from deciding which authorities require referrals through to closing an authority's referral response.

Certification of a Plan in SPEAR Process

A flowchart detailing the process from reviewing an application for a plan of SPEAR through to certifying the plan for certification. This is a short process, with only 5 steps between.

Issuing a Statement of Compliance in SPEAR

A flowchart detailing the process from ensuring the application meets the requirements of the permit, legislation and Subdivision team through to the Staged Subdivision. Interestingly, this process is unassigned as to which role is responsible for this process.

Planning Applicant Survey (2014)

A survey distributed to recent planning applicants to gauge the level of satisfaction they felt regarding Council's planning services.

Results from a 2014 Survey

The survey seemed to focus around the satisfaction of planning permit applicants with their assigned Council officer. For questions related to the professionalism, responsiveness and attention to detail Council came out to be generally 'good' or 'average'. The most polarising question related to how informed Council kept the applicant throughout the process, which came out more strongly as both poor and good.

Results from a 2015 Survey

This was the same survey, mailed out a year later. Council generally seemed to have improved over the course of the year, as for the questions related to the professionalism, responsiveness and attention to detail Council now tended to come out as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. The question relating to how informed applicants felt also had a higher response rate for ‘good’ when compared to the previous year.

Subdivision Managing Estate Permit Conditions

A flowchart detailing the process from determining whether an application is eligible for the internal database through to managing the conditions in SPEAR.

APPENDIX 6: PREVIOUS SERVICE REVIEWS/AUDITS

Wyndham Planning Health Audit and Review 2015
IO Consulting Group

Purpose: This health check was an audit and review of Wyndham council's statutory planning team and processes.

This a summary of the more relevant discussions, issues and recommendation made within this audit.

- Many statutory planners do not understand what happens in the strategic planning of greenfield areas. This audit recommends allocating statutory planning staff to specific PSP areas to build their knowledge and try to bridge the divide between the two halves of the planning team.
- Software programs aren't fully integrated across the council, with some departments using different programs, and this is creating wasted time spent on re-entering data. This audit recommends upgrading the IT and placing a high priority upon the integration of processing and record keeping software.
- Further Information Requests (FIR) are currently inefficient at Council. One of the causes of delayed timeframes and unnecessary administration is that the lodgement stage does not screen out incomplete submissions or hold them at the point of entry whilst waiting for the required information. Instead, incomplete submissions are fed to the relevant staffer. This audit recommends hiring a trained planner to act as a first point of contact, on the phones and desk, with the ability to prevent incomplete submissions from progressing to council. Alternatively, a self-audit checklist for the applicant to sign, and declare that they have submitted all the required documents, would be similarly useful.
- Internal referrals are a Council pain-point that is slowing down their processes. The reason for this was that staff did not prioritise these highly enough or always respond in full. In turn time and effort needs to be spent chasing these up. This audit recommends that the referee send only the relevant information, for the sake of clarity, and have a weekly meeting to follow-up any delayed responses.
- Growth area planners felt under-equipped on how to deal with day-to-day discretions on development land. This has led to inconsistent advice being given across departments. These staff believe that they would be better equipped by location specific plans and more precise guidelines on practical layouts.
- The PAT team sometimes lacks a consistent voice. To address this, the audit recommends the PAT team should collectively set the agenda, scope and nature of policy advice required from each department present.

Relevant Victoria Auditor General Office Reports

Managing Surplus Government Land, 8th March 2018:

- *Context:* The state government owns a lot of land within Victoria, some of which is surplus to its needs and not being used with purpose. Sometimes this land is identified in areas where there are community needs for new land uses, but the physical availability of land is in short supply. In these areas if there is a clear benefit to unlocking public land for needed infrastructure or housing, then the government can sell it on the private market.
- *Objective:* This audit is looking at how to make this process more transparent, holistic and consistent across government bodies and better tailored to the areas where it's needed. The purpose is to maximise value for the government.
- *Result:* Land Use Victoria was established in response to manage the unlocking and sale of government land.

Effectively Planning for Population Growth, tabled 23rd August 2017:

- *Objective:* From 2009 the GAA – now VPA – established Precinct Structure Plans (PSP's) as a mechanism for integrating land use plans and infrastructure plans. PSP's use standards based on predicted population numbers to work out the checklist of infrastructure and services that need to be provided, however this isn't meant to be prescriptive. Given the nature of planning for communities, PSP's should be made with heavy input from health, environment, education and transport bodies to get the best suite of outcomes when it's needed. However, there is little coordination between these different agencies and growth area councils. At the end of the timeframe, the PSP guidelines state that councils, in consultation with the VPA, are to review whether the PSP has delivered its key outcomes every five years. This audit found no evidence that growth area councils have initiated these reviews.
- *Result:* The report made several recommendations to four different agencies – DELWP, DHS, VPA and DET. Broadly the recommendations sought to clarify the implementation and creation stages of PSP's by defining expectations between agencies. It was advised that PSP's tighten particular phrases, such as 'timely delivery', in order to remove ambiguity and achieve this.

Supporting communities through developer contributions and infrastructure contributions, financial year 2019 – 2020:

- *Objective*: To determine whether development and infrastructure contributions provide required infrastructure to new and growing communities.
- *Summary*: This report is planned to be released later in 2020.

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