

Officer South Employment Precinct Structure Plan

Submission to: Victorian Planning Authority public consultation process

27 October 2023

About Greater South East Melbourne

Greater South East Melbourne (GSEM) advocates for jobs, infrastructure, investment, liveability, sustainability and wellbeing for the southeast and everyone who works and lives in the region.

GSEM includes the shires of Cardinia and Mornington Peninsula, and the cities of Casey, Frankston, Greater Dandenong, Kingston, Knox and Monash.

Southeast Melbourne is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia's fastest growing city and is one of the country's most important economic centres.

The Greater South East Melbourne region has more than 1.5 million residents. It stretches from the northern borders of the City of Monash and Knox City Council, to Fort Nepean on the tip of the Mornington Peninsula, to the edge of Gippsland in Cardinia Shire.

The southeast produces \$85 billion in Gross Regional Product and is one of Australia's largest manufacturing regions, with more manufacturing jobs than greater Adelaide and Western Sydney.

GSEM's vision

GSEM's vision is for job creation, job retention, future proofing the community and ensuring liveability and sustainability.

Jobs growth and congestion-busting strategies are needed to keep the region working, moving and thriving.

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About the region

Jobs in the GSEM region

The region is home to two National Employment and Innovation Clusters, one at Monash (75,000 jobs) and the other at Dandenong (55,000 jobs). Another 9,000 people are employed in Carrum Downs.

More than 470,000 are employed in the region but more than 232,000 workers commute to jobs opportunities outside southeast Melbourne. Employment growth in the GSEM region is not keeping up with population growth, resulting in congestion and inadequate public transport services.

Population growth

Greater South East Melbourne is a key economic driver for the state of Victoria. Over the next 40 years, the South East Economic Corridor (SEEC) is anticipated to accommodate an additional 600,000 people, this figure is even higher when considering the Greater South East Melbourne region.

Greater South East Melbourne has more than 1.5 million people and is expected to grow to close to two million in the next 10 years. Within this region there is strong population growth expected in the Casey and Cardinia areas, currently they have more than 490,000 residents and that is expected to grow to 703,000 by 2031.

Looking at the South East Economic Corridor (SEEC), the projected growth is equivalent to 4.2 times Greater Geelong's present population, or 9.1 times Greater Bendigo's population.

This region is growing rapidly, and population growth is not being matched by the delivery of infrastructure or increases in service provision. Numerous pressures are being faced by residents making their homes in the South East, from lack of job opportunities, struggles accessing education and healthcare, and roads becoming increasingly congested as people try to travel closer to the CBD for work and education.

It is important to make the most of existing infrastructure while planning and building for future population and jobs growth. This new precinct presents a strong opportunity to bring more jobs to the region, but it must be done in a way that ensures the appropriate transport and other enabling infrastructure is in place.

Securing the best outcome

GSEM supports the Officer South Employment Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) proceeding and welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft plan, it is in the interest of the entire region that the precinct reaches its projected outcomes.

The Officer South Employment Precinct is projected to deliver 22,000 jobs and provide 1,600 new homes.

Officer South Employment Precinct key statistics:

- 1,069 hectares
- 22,000 new jobs
- 1,600 new homes

This significant development will place further strain on the local road network and with workers needing to come into the region to access jobs and residents needing to move around the region to access employment, services and education.

This is a significant precinct. It covers an area of approximately 1,069 hectares, bound by Cardinia Creek to the west, the Princes Freeway to the north, Lower Gum Scrub Creek to the east and the Urban Growth Boundary to the south. The proposed Thompsons Road upgrade and extension would pass through this precinct and would be needed in order for the Officer South Employment Precinct to be fully developed and deliver the projected 22,000 jobs.

The draft plan acknowledges that the work on the PSP also needs to be coordinated with strategic planning for the alignment of Thompsons Road, a pivotal east-west arterial freight route. The draft plan acknowledges that Thompsons Road is a key freight that links to existing employment precinct and also through to a potential South East Melbourne Airport.

However currently the road is not adequate to this key role, there needs to a staged approach to the development of the Precinct that allows for further work to be done to secure support for Thompsons Road.

A staged approach to the development of the precinct is welcomed however there must be the ability for that staged approach to be flexible and respond to emerging issues. The staged approach must also recognise that the greatest need in the region is for industrial land and employment opportunities.

That must be the element of the Officer South Precinct that should happen first and take precedent over residential development.

Much residential growth has already occurred in the local government areas of Casey and Cardinia and we recognise that Australia is facing significant housing challenge. However residential growth cannot and should not happen without infrastructure and jobs growth. The people who live in our region deserve to have jobs closer to home.

The demand for industrial land

A recent report by the Victorian Skills Commissioner found that the South East Melbourne region is the largest and fastest growing region among the six metropolitan regions that make up Melbourne's economy. The South East Melbourne Region is hosts more than 500,000 jobs and 83,500 businesses.¹

The region is a key economic driver for the Victorian economy with industrial and jobs precincts located throughout the region, in Monash, Dandenong, Frankston, Knoxfield, Braeside and Carrum Downs. These key employment precincts are at or nearing capacity, with many businesses now unable to expand or looking elsewhere for their growth plans.

The demand for more land and expansion opportunities are pressing. The Officer South Precinct has the potential to provide the capacity for expansion in a way that is complementary to the current precincts in the region and other infrastructure investment that is underway.

There is a significant need for more industrial land and there is a significant need for more jobs locally. Population growth across the region has not been matched by job creation. A significant proportion of workers living in the areas closest to the Officer South Precinct are forced to travel far from their homes to work. Given this situation, it is essential that the PSP prioritise the development of the industrial land in the first instance as the more industrial land and more jobs is the immediate need for the region.

GSEM has conducted research on the need for industrial land in the southeast. In GSEM's economic impact assessment of the [Thompsons Road Upgrade and Extension](#), it became clear that the opportunity to create local jobs, facilitate population growth and deliver greater net benefit for the region was tangible.

¹ <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-06/South-East-Melbourne-Skills-Demand-Snapshot.pdf>

Transport Infrastructure

Many of the people who live in the South East who would be served by the Officer South Precinct currently leave the region for employment. The [SOUTH EAST ECONOMIC CORRIDOR | Strategic Context Report to 2060](#) produced by the Victorian Planning Authority, acknowledges that many of the region's workers have to leave where they live for employment opportunities.

That same report highlights that there are currently 320,000 workers residing in the South East Economic Corridor (SEEC), and that figure is likely to increase to 580,000 by 2060.² This forecasted growth will result in more people driving on an already busy road network.

Approximately 110,000 people are leaving the Casey and Cardinia LGAs every day to go to work. Many of whom would have to use Thompsons Road as a key transport route. This is a pattern occurring across the region, 63.7% of workers living in Frankston leave the LGA for work and 64.7% of workers from Greater Dandenong do the same. Many of these workers are going to employment opportunities closer to central Melbourne or going into Melbourne CBD itself³.

The majority of workers in this region are leaving their local area for work and are commuting by car. 84% in Greater Dandenong, 90% in Casey and 91% in Cardinia, compared to 76% for Greater Melbourne⁴.

Commuting for work:

A large proportion of workers across GSEM leave their LGA for work closer to Melbourne or travel to the CBD itself:

- Greater Dandenong: 84%
- Casey: 90%
- Cardinia 91%

Most commute by car.

Given these statistics, it is imperative that the PSP addresses the enabling transport infrastructure, in particular the Thompsons Road corridor. Thompsons Road will be the key route to bring people to work in the Officer South precinct. It will also be a key travel route out of the precinct for those residents who will live in the area. The success of the Officer South Precinct is linked to Thompsons Road and there must be a plan in place to extend and develop this important transport link.

² [SOUTH EAST ECONOMIC CORRIDOR | Strategic Context Report to 2060](#) pg.21

³ Thompsons Road Upgrade and Extension: Economic Impact Assessment by REMPLAN

⁴ SOUTH EAST ECONOMIC CORRIDOR | Strategic Context Report to 2060

Employment in the South East

As highlighted previously there is a key need for more jobs in Melbourne's southeast.

GSEM commissioned SGS Economics & Planning to research employment in the southeast in September 2022. SGS produced the [Greater South East Skills and Employment Analysis](#).

This report showed that:

- Employment in knowledge intensive business services, as well as rates of tertiary education attainment has been historically low in the GSEM region relative to metropolitan Melbourne.
- Male, female, and youth unemployment rates have been higher in the GSEM region than the Greater Melbourne average, particularly for Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia.
- Trends in participation rate are more nuanced, yet a notable finding is that of lower female participation in the region. A lack of local jobs may be a key barrier to female participation in the region – Casey, Cardinia have noticeably lower local jobs per working resident than the Greater Melbourne average.

This strong evidence for more jobs in Cardinia and Casey supports the need for the Officer South Precinct to be implemented and the development of the industrial land should be prioritised to meet the needs of the local community.

Alongside providing the industrial land and developing the transport infrastructure around the new Precinct, there also needs to be investment and planning done into how the land can best be activated and developed to support industries that can provide a range of employment opportunities.

There are many skilled workers in the region not able to find jobs at their qualification levels, consideration should be given to the innovative ways this Precinct could be developed to attract high-value high skilled industries that can bring a wider range of employment opportunities to the southeast, especially for women.

What local stakeholders say: South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance

The South East has been a core driver of economic growth for Victoria. The Officer South Employment Precinct will greatly add to this economic contribution to the region by supplying further industrial land that is needed.

- The South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance (SEMMA) is supportive of the development of the Officer South Employment Precinct. Our people need more jobs closer to home and this precinct has the potential to deliver some of these key employment opportunities.
- SEMMA calls for the development of the industrial land to be prioritised and supported to address the strong demand for industrial land and the need for more jobs in the region.
- SEMMA would like further consideration to be given to the need for enabling transport infrastructure for this precinct – specifically the upgrading and extension of Thompsons Road. The full benefits of this proposed precinct will not be realised without Thompsons Road being upgraded and extended.
- SEMMA welcomes and is supportive of a staged approach outlined in the PSP, this should be retained in the final documents and is crucial to the success of the precinct as it allows time for the region and government to find a funding solution for Thompsons Road project and other enabling infrastructure.

SEMMA

SEMMA (the South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance) is the peak industry association for more than 200 leading manufacturing companies in south east Melbourne; Australia's most dynamic manufacturing region.

SEMMA believes that a staged approach needs to be flexible and developed in collaboration with relevant partners, industry and other stakeholders.

If VPA can put the Horizon model into place with other considerations as mentioned above – SEMMA believes the outcomes will bring a multitude of benefits now and well into 2060 meeting the needs of a multitude of community stakeholders.

Honi Walker
Chief Executive Officer
SEMMA
Oct 2023

What local stakeholders say: South East Local Learning and Employment Network (SELLEN)

The benefits of the Officer South PSP go far beyond the jobs, which is significant.

There are major economic, family, health and environmental benefits too.

The more jobs we can get locally, the better off we're going to be. The likelihood of people having to travel considerable distances – 50 kilometres or more – to get to secure employment, particularly if they live in Cardinia, is almost double that of metro Melbourne.

The impact that that has on family, on health, on the quality of food people are eating – because of the extra time in the car and it's easier to go to a drive through – is immense.

Jobs closer to home mean less pressure on public transport, less road congestion, fewer cars per family, less air and noise pollution, and it also helps Victoria get to net-zero faster.

The jobs are crucial. The majority of employed Cardinia residents are required to leave the LGA to secure employment opportunities and that puts stress on the public transport systems and especially on roads.

We've got to get to net zero very soon, but people are about 10% more likely to have multiple cars in their house if they live in the southeast because of transport connectivity issues.

If we could get jobs close to where people live and put a couple of bus routes through the region as well, there are major benefits for the environment too.

Andrew Simmons
Chief Executive Officer
SELLEN
Oct 2023

SELLEN

SELLEN (the South East Local Learning & Employment Network) is a community managed network in the south east, working to give 10-to-19-year-olds a better go at successfully moving through the education system to employment.

Conclusion

The South East has been a core driver of economic growth for Victoria. The Officer South Employment Precinct will only add to this economic contribution.

The Precinct will add to the region and supply further industrial land that is needed.

- GSEM supports the development of the Officer South Employment Precinct. Our people need more jobs closer to home and this precinct has the potential to deliver some of these key employment opportunities.
- GSEM calls for the development of the industrial land to be prioritised and supported to address the strong demand for industrial land and the need for more jobs in the region.
- GSEM would like further consideration to be given to the need for enabling transport infrastructure for this precinct – specifically the upgrading and extension of Thompsons Road. The full benefits of this proposed precinct will not be realised without Thompsons Road being upgraded and extended.
- GSEM welcomes and is supportive of a staged approach outlined in the PSP, this should be retained in the final documents and is crucial to the success of the precinct as it allows time for the region and government to find a funding solution for the Thompsons Road project and other enabling infrastructure. However, a staged approach needs to be flexible and developed in collaboration with relevant partners.