



Department of Health

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Stuart Moseley
Chief Executive Officer
Victorian Planning Authority

[REDACTED]
Dear Mr Moseley

Additional submission to the VPA: land requirements within the Officer South Employment PSP

As per my previous letter of 24 January 2022, the department has identified several opportunities within the Officer South Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) that would meet government objectives to deliver accessible community and health services in the South-East Growth Corridor.

Following the recent release of the Department of Health's [Strategic Plan 2023-27](#), which focuses on finding new ways to link preventative and early intervention healthcare through community-based services to reduce the chances of untreated health conditions worsening to the point of needing hospital care, the department has re-assessed the acute and community services footprint and is able to reduce the site size for reservation from 3ha to 2ha if required.

Engaging in the PSP process for Officer South enables the department to better meet community needs through a proactive land reservation approach that provides flexibility and cost savings. The department is requesting to reserve land in Officer South through this PSP for the reasons outlined below.

1. Site size

A 2ha land reservation would provide the department with greater flexibility to increase the scale of services to meet growing populations. Recent updates to the [VPA's PSP Guidelines](#) include increased dwelling densities for PSPs which are not currently reflected in the department's projected population numbers. It is anticipated that the scale of health services provided will need to increase as the locality dwelling density requirements increase.

A 2ha site provides the department with maximum flexibility to provide the services that the Officer South community may require in the future, including:

- Early Parenting Centres
- Public Sector Residential Aged Care services

- Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug services, including residential rehabilitation facilities and community-based mental health services
- Ambulance Branches

Each of these service types require a 4,000 – 6,000sqm site size depending on the level of service demand and would benefit from co-location opportunities with other essential services such as social and affordable housing for key workers.

2. Site location

Access to public transport and arterial roads are essential health service requirements to ensure accessibility for both key workers and health service clients. This site provides workers and clients with both public transport options and the potential for car parking.

The accessibility of healthcare services impacts service demand. If clients cannot easily access services in proximity to them, they will present at other healthcare sites which places a significant burden on that healthcare service. For example, in 2016 the Victorian Government invested \$135 million to expand the Casey Hospital to meet the soaring demand for healthcare in Melbourne's outer south-east, as the population is expected to increase by 35% by 2036.

3. Planning for health services

Health infrastructure planning is complex, ever-changing and cannot be guided by population metrics alone. Health care needs are determined by many factors, including public awareness of health issues, population diversity, the capacity of the private health sector, and healthcare delivery requirements and policy.

Health care needs and models of care have changed significantly over the last two decades, significantly impacting the health infrastructure pipeline. A number of health services and facilities that were not foreseen 10-20 years ago are now in various stages of delivery. For example, the recommendations from the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System* and the *Inquest into the passing of Veronica Nelson* have resulted in new models of care such as the [Local Services](#) program, an important part of Victoria's reformed mental health and wellbeing system, and sobering centres, Victoria's new health-led response to public intoxication. Each of these new models of care have specific infrastructure requirements.

The scope of services covered under the public health system continues to be reformed following significant community events, research findings and changes in community needs. Reserving land early in community development means that the health care needs of a future community are far more likely to be able to be met when needed.

Additionally, there is recognition that the current health infrastructure portfolio is based on the understanding that PSP areas are being developed at a rate of 15 dwellings per developable hectare. As the latest [VPA PSP Guidelines](#) (updated in October 2021) promote PSPs areas to facilitate increased population densities, with an average of 30 dwellings or more per hectare in certain locations, this significant density increase further necessitates proactive site identification for health services in PSPs. By allocating land within PSP areas for health infrastructure, the risk of poor service provision for these new communities is reduced.

4. Financial and delivery impacts

Historically, the department has not engaged in the PSP process to reserve land in a growth corridor. Although government has the power to compulsorily acquire land for certain health uses, this is an avenue of last resort, can have significant impacts on the affected community, and comes at a significantly higher cost than if an appropriate land area is reserved in advance. The time taken to find land and negotiate a suitable price also takes time and resourcing, and in some cases has led to delays in project delivery. The department has experienced this problem with Ambulance Victoria infrastructure projects across Tarneit, Pakenham, Melton and Rockbank, where there is limited availability of suitable sites due to no health designation.

I welcome the opportunity for the department to continue to be involved in the PSP process and provide any further information required on the identified land uses. As this is the first time the department has requested land be reserved through this process, I look forward to better outcomes for the community to be realised through this engagement.

The relevant contact for this matter is [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Chris Hotham
Deputy Secretary
Health Infrastructure
Department of Health

13/12/2023