

20 October 2025

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Victorian Planning Authority
Department of Transport and Planning
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

**Central Highlands Water Submission
Public Consultation on the Ballarat North Precinct Structure Plan, Development
Contributions Plan, Native Vegetation Precinct Plan and Draft Amendment C256Ball to
the Ballarat Planning Scheme**

We refer to your letter received 16 September 2025 and advise Central Highlands Water (CHW) appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the draft Planning Scheme Amendment C256ball ("the Amendment").

CHW has been extensively consulted on the development of the Ballarat North Precinct Structure Plan (the PSP) as it relates to the provision of reticulated water and sewerage services and appreciates the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) seeking our input. We are pleased provide the following submission which is to be read in conjunction with our earlier comments, as relevant.

Background

Central Highlands Region Water Corporation (trading as Central Highlands Water) is a Water Corporation established under the *Water Act 1989* (Vic). CHW manages water supply and sewerage services within water and sewerage districts established under the *Water Act 1989* within the region, including the districts established for Ballarat.

As the infrastructure installed for water and sewerage networks generally has a 100-year life cycle and is the result of a considerable investment by water corporations on behalf of their customers, it is essential that planning decisions are made with a long-term perspective. This is reinforced through the objectives of planning in Victoria set out in the Planning and Environment Act 1987 which provide that the development of land be undertaken in a way that is fair, orderly, economic and sustainable. Further objectives within the Act provide for the protection of public utilities and to enable the orderly provision and coordination of utility services.

Across its region CHW supplies water and sewerage services to an approximate population of 190,000 with around 80,000 water and 70,000 sewerage connections. CHW also supplies recycled water for public use facilities and agricultural purposes.

Ballarat Water and Sewerage Systems

Within Ballarat CHW supplies water and sewerage services to around 65,000 domestic, commercial and industrial properties.

The Ballarat reticulated sewerage system is serviced by two significant wastewater treatment plants including the Ballarat North Water Reclamation Plant (BNWRP) that is located close to the PSP. The BNWRP will service the Ballarat North PSP. There are around 10,500 sewerage connections and a significant proportion of Ballarat's industrial customers discharging sewage and trade waste to the BNWRP. The BNWRP is longstanding community infrastructure, having been constructed in 1962 and progressively upgraded over time to process increased wastewater as Ballarat has grown. The most recent significant plant upgrade work was carried out in 2008 and included the construction of a new tertiary treatment plant producing effluent suitable for reuse. The BNWRP has the potential for adverse amenity due to odour emitted as part of the treatment processes. The Ballarat Planning Scheme recognises a buffer area to the BNWRP to protect the community and the ongoing operation of this important community infrastructure.

The water supply system for Ballarat is sourced from catchments to the east of the city and includes the Lal Lal Reservoir, White Swan Reservoir and various smaller reservoirs, several service basins and a network of water reticulation mains.

The location of the PSP, near the BNWRP, minimises the scale of connecting trunk sewer infrastructure required to service the future development of the PSP and its expansion area. CHW has also recently extended a trunk sewer adjacent to the freeway to connect developments east of the PSP. This trunk sewer was constructed with additional capacity to service a significant area of the eastern portion of the proposed Stage 1 of the PSP.

The PSP has access to the trunk water network that services the northern areas of Ballarat. Notwithstanding this, CHW is also planning for a major upgrade to the water supply system in this area that will ultimately augment the supply for the PSP and when further extended to other future growth areas. The first stage of this major augmentation is planned for delivery over the next 3-5 years and will be needed to service the full extent of the PSP and its subsequent expanded area.

Within the PSP developers will be required to meet the cost of the necessary reticulation systems for their developments, and New Customer Contribution charges, in accordance standard arrangements for developing land.

Submissions in relation to the draft Amendment and draft Precinct Structure Plan

Staging

CHW notes the staging plan (Plan 10 Page 41) and supports identifying Stage 1 in the south-eastern part of the PSP. This area is close to existing sewer and water trunk mains that can service Stage 1 provided planned works are also progressed. This is considered an efficient use of existing infrastructure. It should be noted that some areas in Stage 2 are difficult to service without significant network augmentation. This is shown conceptually in Figure 1 below. CHW has invested and continues to invest in capacity within the eastern section of the growth area.

CHW believes it would be advantageous to add Stages 2A & 2B to the staging plan to identify the final stage of development within the PSP (please note that this would not include the expanded area north of Cummins Road. CHW notes that planning for the expanded area will be subject to a separate planning scheme amendment).

Stage 2A & 2B would generally be in accordance with the areas of higher service difficulty as shown in Figure 1 (shown in red). These areas are generally in the north-western extent of the PSP and land to the immediate west of the BNWRP boundary. We believe this would provide improved certainty for all agencies when planning for services.



Figure 1

Expanded Area

CHW supports the identification of an expanded area of the PSP north of Cummins Road to enable us to plan for future infrastructure during the servicing of the current Stages 1 & 2. CHW will design assets where appropriate with capacity for the expanded area as a natural extension of the growth area.

CHW will provide further comment on the expanded area as part of the future PSP development and planning scheme amendment process for that area.

Ballarat North Water Reclamation Plan – ESO4

The BNWRP is affected by the Environmental Significance Overlay 4 - Wastewater Treatment Plant Buffer Area under the Ballarat Planning Scheme. This overlay seeks to provide for the ongoing operation of wastewater treatment plants. The control of land use and development within the buffer area of the BNWRP is an important land use planning mechanism to protect the community from any adverse amenity potential from unplanned odour emissions from the plant and to protect this important infrastructure. As previously submitted and discussed during the preparation of the PSP, land within the overlay should not be developed for any purpose that might compromise the continued operation or expansion of wastewater treatment facilities to service the current and future population of the municipality.

CHW welcomes the ongoing application of ESO4 to land within the PSP area and the exclusion of sensitive uses within the ESO4 (as shown on Plan 2 Page 12) and the application of the full extent of the ESO4 buffer in the PSP. The protection of this buffer areas will enable the ongoing flexibility and augmentation within the BNWRP that is required as the BNWRP catchment develops.

While the ESO4 will remain the primary control for assessing the suitability of land use and development within the buffer, CHW recommends that the Place Based Plan be amended to appropriately identify the relevant buffer distance. This is consistent with the PSP's identification of the appropriate buffer distance for landfill gas and the asphalt plant.

We also observe that the applied zone to the uncredited open space to be the General Residential Zone. In these areas, the UGZ3 schedule identifies specific permit requirements for the use of land for sensitive uses (including Accommodation), with a notation that these uses are Section 1 – No permit required with a condition that they must not be on land shown within the asphalt plant buffer and landfill buffer. CHW submits it would appropriate for a similar exclusion to be made for the BNWRP, in addition to identifying the buffer on the Place Based Plan.

Integrated Water Management (IWM)

CHW notes that the PSP provides high-level commentary on Integrated Water Management (IWM) generally around reducing reliance on potable water and re-use of water through stormwater harvesting and recycling. CHW has been involved in the development of the Ballarat West PSP where daily water consumption targets were incorporated via the inclusion of the Ballarat Potable Water Demand Target where a target of 124 litres per person per day is stipulated including and is commonly achieved via the use of rainwater tanks to harvest water for internal use to flush toilets and in the laundry. It is not clear what has been set in the Ballarat North PSP for potable water demand targets and CHW believes this would be beneficial to be included.

CHW has been tasked with developing a business case for the provision of Class A recycled water from the BNWRP to the PSP. CHW has commenced the development of a business case study to justify the potential investment. Steps completed thus far include:

- Scope of work defined, and project brief developed.
- Procurement process completed with expert engineering and economic consultants engaged.
- Business case works underway with key principles and priorities defined, assessment criteria developed, and long-list of options generated.

The business case is expected to be completed in March 2026.

If recycled water is to be used for connections to each building/dwelling for use inside and outside the building, CHW would not support any form of IWM that would hinder the implementation and use of recycled water. CHW also notes that a recycled water scheme connected to dwellings would remove the need to install rainwater tanks (or other solutions) to achieve any potable water demand targets.

Drainage

CHW has made comment regarding the drainage concept design during the development stages of the PSP. It should be noted that drainage basins and similar drainage structures must be remote from CHW's infrastructure. CHW will not support the need to move existing sewer mains especially large trunk mains due to the location of drainage basins and other drainage structures.

Conclusion

CHW appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the consultation phase of the Ballarat North PSP and has welcomed our involvement in the development of the PSP. CHW supports the proposed amendment in its current form.

Future developments within the PSP can ultimately be supplied with water and sewerage noting some augmentation works are required which will follow as the land within the PSP is

further developed. CHW will work with developers to design and plan for future infrastructure in accordance with CHW Land Development Manual and policies.

CHW supports no sensitive development within ESO 4 – Wastewater Treatment Plant Buffer Area. This overlay seeks to provide for the ongoing operation of wastewater treatment plant, and the exclusion of sensitive uses allows for the ongoing efficient operation of this vital public infrastructure.

CHW will continue to work through the IWM business case for the supply of recycled water to the PSP and will provide the VPA with updates as they occur. We look forward to working with the VPA on this project and other projects in the future.

For further information on this submission please contact [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
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Yours faithfully,

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