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Networks with the regional cities

Direction 3

- 3.1 Promote the growth of regional cities and key towns on regional transport corridors as part of a networked cities model
- 3.2 Control development in rural areas to protect agriculture and avoid inappropriate rural residential development



Promote the growth of regional cities and key towns on regional transport corridors as part of a networked cities model

The major regional centres close to metropolitan Melbourne (Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and the towns of the Latrobe Valley) will become the focus for accelerated development to encourage the concept of networked cities. The Government will plan for and support these cities as viable alternative locations to metropolitan Melbourne in which to live, work, run businesses and relax.

The Latrobe Valley has already been the focus of Government action through the Latrobe Valley Ministerial Taskforce. The *Framework for the future* report primarily provides direction for improving the economic prospects of the Latrobe Valley. This was a special case of assistance required to redress significant social and economic issues brought about by severe economic restructuring. However, the example of State and local government and communities working together to achieve better overall outcomes for Victoria can be used in regional planning in all areas.

Regional planning will ensure that these cities and surrounding regions can take advantage of opportunities for growth





Regional planning for the areas around the regional cities needs to ensure that infrastructure services are in place so that these cities and their surrounding regions will be able to take advantage of opportunities for growth that will accrue from improved linkages to metropolitan Melbourne.

Issues to be considered will include:

- ensuring that new development is supported by strong transport links that provide an appropriate choice of travel consistent with *Melbourne 2030* principles, and by providing strong communications links

- limiting the impact of urban development on non-urban areas and supporting development in those urban areas that can accommodate growth
- developing and reinforcing the distinctive roles and character of each city
- fostering the development of towns around the regional cities that are on regional transport routes.

Planning in and around the regional centres will be done in partnership with local councils and other key stakeholders. The planning process will be designed to include substantial community involvement.



Figure 32. Regional cities and townships

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Existing urban area | Major road |
| Regional transport corridor | Rail network |
| Planning area | |



Towns on and around the improved regional transport network may come under more pressure for commuter or lifestyle-related development. That pressure will be focused on towns that are best able to accommodate increased growth, while also protecting conservation and heritage values and the surrounding natural resource base. These key towns will already have the necessary physical, social and cultural infrastructure to support expanded populations and provide local employment opportunities, or they will be able to accommodate it. The Government will work with local councils in the transport corridors to identify the key towns and plan for their future development.

Initiatives

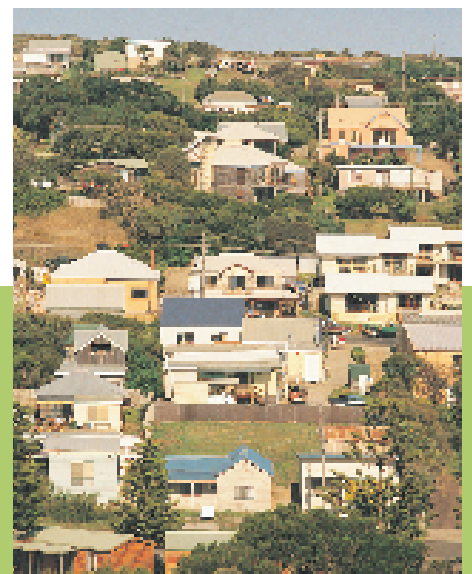
- 3.1.1 Develop integrated action plans for the regions centred on Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong
- 3.1.2 Help local planning authorities to plan for growth in the key towns likely to benefit from improved rail services on each of the regional transport corridors between metropolitan Melbourne and the regional centres of Ballarat, Bendigo and the Latrobe Valley
- 3.1.3 Help local planning authorities to identify smaller settlements around metropolitan Melbourne where planning should be directed at limiting growth and protecting local character
- 3.1.4 Investigate the potential for growth in towns along the regional transport corridor to Seymour and beyond, as part of looking at future improvement to public transport services in that corridor



Control development in rural areas to protect agriculture and avoid inappropriate rural residential development

Each year, rural residential development in the area covered by the 'network cities' concept (including metropolitan Melbourne) provides some 4 per cent of all new housing development. At last estimate, there were between 60,000 and 80,000 vacant lots in the region's rural areas. Many are part of active agricultural units but could be sold off separately. In the metropolitan area alone, this type of development accounts for about 3 per cent of new housing. Over time, *Melbourne 2030* proposes to reduce the proportion of new housing development provided in rural areas in order to encourage consolidation into existing settlements where the investment in physical and community infrastructure and services has already been made.

Over time, *Melbourne 2030* will encourage consolidation into places where infrastructure and services are already in place



Future planning for rural residential development will avoid or significantly reduce adverse economic, social and environmental impacts. Rural residential development should:

- maintain the long-term sustainable use and management of existing natural resource attributes, in activities such as agricultural production
- protect existing environmental qualities, such as water quality, native vegetation, biodiversity and habitat
- minimise or avoid short-term and long-term property servicing costs carried by local and State governments.

Existing small lots in rural areas, where the neighbouring uses are predominantly for natural resource extraction or production, will be discouraged from use for rural living or other incompatible uses. Such lots should be reduced in number through lot consolidation.



Initiatives

- 3.2.1** Complete the review of rural zones and amend the zone provisions to provide an improved framework to implement State and local policy for the management of agriculture and other natural resource-based uses
- 3.2.2** Investigate ways to discourage development of isolated small lots in rural zones and to encourage consolidation of existing lots

3.2.3 Amend *Ministerial Direction No. 6 (Rural Residential Development)* so that it also applies to all proposals for rezoning of land that would create lot sizes greater than two hectares and less than eight hectares, and include improved performance standards for limiting natural resource impacts, environmental impacts, and servicing and infrastructure requirements

- 3.2.4** Update current policies on State and Commonwealth-funded education, health and public transport services to rural living developments to reflect *Melbourne 2030* policies
- 3.2.5** Work with local councils to update relevant planning scheme provisions consistent with revised *Ministerial Direction No. 6 (Rural Residential Development)*