

THE CENTRAL BUSINESS AREA

The function of the central business area is regional rather than metropolitan and its problems must be considered from the viewpoint of the whole State. Failure to provide the amenities and facilities necessary for efficient and expeditious conduct of business affairs will have State-wide effect.

The principal needs of the central area are facilities for the free circulation of people and vehicles, accommodation for stationary vehicles, grouping of activities and avoidance of any undue concentration that would cause congestion.

The most obvious and important problem within the central area is the free movement of traffic into, around and out of the area. Although the City Ring Road will improve conditions it will still be necessary to:

- (a) Regulate street uses to facilitate circulation.
- (b) Gradually remove non-essential activities.
- (c) Provide adequate means for entering and leaving the area.

Warehousing, storage and industry need not be located in the central area, and special zones adjacent to the area have been provided for them.

Better access to the central area and improved means of distributing traffic from the southern suburbs to central area destinations are necessary. Some of these needs will be provided by the City Ring Road, but further outlets from the central area to the south will be required. Among other works envisaged are a bridge joining King Street and Hanna Street, a bridge across the railway yards to connect Russell Street with Batman Avenue, and the continuation of Batman Avenue to connect with Queen's Wharf Road and extension of Queen Street to this road.

Solution of the parking problem is one of the greatest challenges to city administrations the world over. The detailed parking needs of the community can be determined only after a special study of the problem, which is beyond the scope of this planning scheme, but some suggestions have been made.

As well as the free circulation of road traffic, the expeditious movement of pedestrians is essential to central area efficiency. The present concentrations near Flinders Street and Spencer Street railway stations will be alleviated by the construction of the city underground railway, but access to the existing stations by subways under the streets will ultimately be desirable.

Melbourne is lacking in small areas of open space within the central business area, and the few opportunities which now exist should be zealously preserved. There are possibilities for more open space opposite Spencer Street Station, on the Western Market site, and near the Law Courts.

The zoning provisions in the planning scheme for the central area have been designed to facilitate the grouping of related activities and to encourage the location of warehousing, storage and industry in the vicinity of the City Ring Road. Bulk zoning does not appear justified at this stage, but the position should be watched.

Every city should have a civic focal point where national or commemorative ceremonies can be held. Melbourne has no such place, but there are possibilities of grouping government, semi-government and civic administrative activities in the vicinity of Parliament House, thus creating a Governmental and Civic Centre which would be worthy of a city of 2,500,000.

COST AND IMPLEMENTATION

The yardstick against which all the proposals of the planning scheme have been tested is that they should be practicable, both physically and financially. In considering what has been proposed, it must be kept in mind that the planning scheme does not itself make provision for carrying out any work, but merely points out what is necessary and preserves existing opportunities. The public works necessary for the efficient functioning of a large

city will be carried out as part of the normal programme of civic improvement when the need arises and the community can afford them. Nevertheless, care must be taken that no unnecessary restrictions are imposed by attempting to preserve opportunities for works unlikely to be needed, or to provide for conditions unlikely to occur within a reasonable period. All must be related to the probable needs of the community in the period for which the scheme provides. Because the planning scheme is a long-range one and provides for the needs of a city much larger than Melbourne today, the works visualised will be spread over a long period and their cost will not fall only on the people of today.

The planning scheme comprises scheme maps which show the areas which can be used for particular purposes and an ordinance which sets out the precise uses to which the land may be put and the conditions applying to such use.

For planning purposes land use may be divided into zones and reservations. Zoning, while restricting the use of the land within broad classifications, permits a variety of uses. Within these use limitations the land may be used as the owner thinks best and private ownership and the right of transfer are unrestricted. Reservations restrict the use of land to some specified purpose, usually a community service, and imply eventual acquisition by the community.

Because of the previous haphazard growth of the city, there are many cases where existing land use is incompatible with the zoning provisions of the scheme. These non-conforming uses will be permitted to continue, but their expansion will be restricted to pave the way for their eventual elimination.

As the planning scheme does not in itself provide for the carrying out of any works, its cost cannot include the cost of works envisaged when formulating it. The cost of the scheme is merely the cost of preserving the opportunities for carrying out those works when they are needed. It is unlikely that the total cost will greatly exceed the value of land and improvements which will ultimately have to be acquired. This cost will not have to be incurred immediately because in most cases existing uses will not have to be disturbed until the land is actually required to enable work to be carried out.

Reviewing the various classes of public works which will be necessary in the future, the conclusion is reached that provided adequate administrative and financial powers are vested in appropriate public authorities, where these do not now exist, and provided such authorities have vision in their planning and determination to achieve their objectives, then the various works of civic development necessary for the future needs of Melbourne can be realised gradually and progressively. The basic question is the proportion of the national income and of the total work force which should be employed on civic development.

Because many of the provisions of the planning scheme are metropolitan in character, and because they could impose an onerous financial burden on individual municipalities, it is apparent that, if the full benefits of metropolitan planning are to be realised there will have to be a central authority with metropolitan jurisdiction and with adequate powers and financial resources to enable it to effectively enforce and carry out the scheme.

The means by which the scheme should be financed is a matter which should have a careful consideration of the Government before it is adopted. As the benefits will extend to the whole State of Victoria, the cost should be shared in proportion to the benefit received by the general body of taxpayers, by the people of the metropolitan area, by the users of road transport, and by the public authorities on whose behalf land has been reserved.