

Background and Objections

5. The provision of a series of major open space reservations within the green wedges strategically placed to serve metropolitan needs. These were intended to be retained in their present open character and be acquired and used for public recreation as appropriate.

6. As part of an urban strategy, the Report outlined two alternatives:—

Alternative 1 retained and encouraged the Melbourne Central Business District as a main focal point in the area but envisaged the establishment of lesser growth centres within the various corridors to encourage their growth in accordance with demand.

Alternative 2 entailed a concentration of growth to the south-east, incorporating a major growth centre. This strategy might need to be adopted should public funds be inadequate to service all corridors, or access to the central area be unduly restricted.

Alternative 1 was the recommended policy.

7. The Report recommended the encouragement in the central, north and west sectors of a greater diversity of population in terms of occupation, income and ethnic structure. Reference was made to locational characteristics of segments of population including out movements from these areas, probably to the south and east, and to the adverse, social and economic consequences. (This aspect is one to which considerable attention has been given in this Report.)

The 1971 proposals represented a change from the earlier concepts of unlimited growth around the perimeter of the city area to one of guiding development into specific corridor locations and giving new and specific emphasis to conservation of natural environments close to the urban area.

Whilst it was estimated that a population of 4.5–4.7 million might be located in the Melbourne Statistical Division by the year 2000, it was anticipated that firmer decentralisation policies and other factors could reduce the rate of growth to some degree. It was felt necessary to retain as much flexibility as possible and the report stated that it would be prudent at that stage “to provide for the

expected order of population growth and for the maximum conservation of resources which lie within the Board's responsibilities”.

This background indicates the way in which the 1971 proposals were built up and the statutory objections and submissions concerning these proposals are set out in the next section.

2. Objections to the General Concept

A list of objectors is included at the end of this section.

It is doubtful if the Town and Country Planning Act envisaged the process of amending schemes on the scale of the ones under consideration. It could in fact be argued that, because some of these objections essentially related to matters of overall metropolitan planning policy and future growth strategy dealt with in the Board's 1971 Planning Policies Report, they do not, in a statutory sense, constitute valid objections to the amending planning schemes.

The Statutory amendments however, have been derived from the base provided by the Policies Report and because of this, importance must be attached to the question of overall metropolitan planning strategy. Consequently the general views and attitudes of the public to the Board's proposed metropolitan policies should be constructively reviewed and evaluated. They may be summarised as follows.

Population Distribution and Size of Melbourne

A general theme of objections lodged against the Board's proposals was a strong view that, in some way, a halt should be called to Melbourne's growth. No specific or positive method for achieving this objective was put forward, but decentralisation was advocated by many and an optimum population target of 3 million was suggested. Some objectors had the mistaken view that the Board's plan advocated proposals to accommodate a population

of between 4½ and 5 million by the turn of the century. In fact, the 1971 Report simply pointed out that growth of this order was likely to be the metropolitan population if the then current trends continued. The proposed policies sought to preserve opportunities for this possibility, but the specific urban zoning proposals provided only sufficient capacity for the development expected in the next 15 years.

Press reports and a series of Ministerial statements both from the Commonwealth and State Governments on decentralisation and objectives designed to limit the size of Melbourne and other cities in Australia, were frequently quoted to the Board by the objectors in support of their case.

The main parties stressing a need for a course of action designed to arrest Melbourne's growth, were the Town and Country Planning Association; Royal Australian Planning Institute (Vic.); Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Vic.); Port Phillip Conservation Council; Victorian Council of Social Services; and a number of councils outside the Board's metropolitan planning area who considered that the Board's plan would inhibit growth opportunities within their own council areas.

Growth Alternatives

The following sections summarize the main alternative concepts put forward by objectors:—

1. South Eastern (Berwick) Corridor

There was strong argument both for and against, the concept of a dominant corridor to the south-east. R. & M. Crow produced a well documented statement advocating that future growth be channelled and confined to a single corridor (referred to as the "Gippsland Corridor"). The submission set out viewpoints which suggested that numerous social and economic benefits would be achieved if this policy were to be adopted. Essentially, the concept advocated a linear form of development within an open corridor some 5 to 6 miles in width, extending, if necessary, as far as Warragul. Within the corridor would be developed a series of independent and self-supporting "metro-towns" served by a spinal rapid transit rail system.

The proposal was to some extent supported by the Town and Country Planning Association and by other individual objectors, although these objectors appeared to support the decentralisation theme. They viewed decentralisation as a preferable alternative to continued outward metropolitan expansion via corridors, although the single corridor concept they favoured in effect, is only a modification of the Board's multi-corridor concept.

Several of the objectors had the misconception that urban development was proposed over all the corridor zones whereas the Report quite clearly indicated that this was not the intention (pp. 52, 54, 81, and 82, 1971 Report).

Implementation of a single corridor policy would require stringent control measures to be imposed on other areas and the development of greater and more sophisticated regulation of all activities associated with metropolitan growth than has been applied in this country up to the present time.

Opponents of the single corridor concept included the Lower Yarra Crossing Authority; the City of Sunshine; and other objectors from the western and northern sectors of Melbourne who understandably do not support any proposals which would result in directing resources elsewhere than towards the west and north.

One opponent of the single corridor, the Shire of Berwick, was actively involved in planning its own future within the framework of the Board's plan and was clearly anxious to establish its own identity. It aimed to achieve this by providing for an optimum population level within its area and by opposing what would otherwise be uninterrupted urban growth linking its present relatively isolated settlements with metropolitan Melbourne. It therefore favoured the redirection of some population growth to other parts.

The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission made submissions which stressed possible drainage and environmental problems in the south-eastern areas beyond Berwick which could be increased with likely detriment to Westernport Bay, should intensive urban development continue in that general area. To a large extent, this had already been realised, by including these areas in a corridor zone.

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2. Berwick Corridor plus Merri or Werribee Corridor

While the proposals of the Town and Country Planning Association, in part, support the Crow concept, the Association differs to the extent that it sees, in addition, the possibility of limited growth along either the Merri or the Werribee corridors. However, the form of development proposed within these corridors follows the pattern proposed by Crow, with the suggestion that such corridors if needed, could be further extended beyond what is currently the Board's planning area.

In this objection, as well as in the previous case, the objectors appear to have misunderstood the purpose of the corridor zones and assumed that ultimately all these zones would be used for Melbourne's urban development.

3. Melton and Werribee Corridors

Objections from the City of Sunshine, the Lower Yarra Crossing Authority and others, stressed the need for the Board to provide special incentives to stimulate the development of the western area generally, and the Melton and Werribee Corridors in particular. They expressed the view that the west had not been receiving proper attention either from the Government or the Board. From an economic viewpoint the Lower Yarra Crossing Authority expressed its concern that unless western incentives were provided, lesser patronage of the West Gate Bridge than had originally been conceived would occur with effects on the economic viability of the project.

The Victorian Council of Social Services, the Planning Institute and the Institute of Architects each supported the above viewpoints and believe that action should be taken by the various Statutory Authorities to stimulate the social, economic and physical improvement of the west. While the cases presented showed recognition and understanding of some of the problems affecting the western sector population, which are referred to in the Board's Planning Policies Report, there were few viewpoints put forward which could be used by the Board or the Government to achieve their suggested goals.

4. Melton as a "Satellite"

The Shire of Melton expressed opposition to what it termed "the uninterrupted corridor zoning" within its Shire. While the Council appreciated the fact that the corridor zone did not necessarily indicate that all the land in the zone would be used for urban purposes, it felt quite strongly that the effect on land values, as a result of speculation within the corridor, would tend to detract from the Council's objective of developing a satellite town at Melton.

Zoning Concepts

1. Non-Urban Zones

Objections to the Board's proposed zoning structure tended to relate to actual control provisions such as subdivisional standards, rather than the zoning proposals themselves and were largely directed to the restrictive nature of the new concept of non-urban zones. On the other hand, numerous individual objectors yet to be heard, argue against the detailed zoning provisions as they affect individual properties, i.e. many with land zoned for a non-urban use desire an urban or potential urban classification.

Support for the non-urban concepts especially the conservation-landscape interest zones came from a number of the groups and individuals during the course of the hearings, with the Conservation Council of Victoria indicating that it would oppose objections which were aimed at reducing or eliminating the non-urban areas recommended in the plan.

Some objectors felt that the proposed standards and ordinance provisions were too inflexible and too restrictive, and compared with the more permissive nature of past zoning provisions, the new provisions were generally considered by these objectors to be unjustified.

Matters which some of the objectors raised included:—

(a) The need to reappraise the separate tenement concept, especially having regard to land use rights which applied to allotments created prior to the gazetting of the Board's Interim Development Orders.

(b) The need to reappraise the proposal whereby all unspecified uses within a zone become prohibited uses. It was felt that because it was impossible for a planning