

THE SCOPE OF THE PLANNING SCHEME

Metropolitan Town Planning Commission was constituted. In 1929 the Commission submitted well studied, comprehensive and far-seeing proposals for controlling the development of the city. It is regrettable that no positive action was taken to give effect to these carefully considered recommendations. Had there been more vision and courage in official circles at that time much cost and inconvenience to the citizens of Melbourne would have been avoided.

The planning scheme now presented reflects the influence of many of the proposals included in the 1929 plan.

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When the Board was given the responsibility for preparing this planning scheme for Melbourne, individual municipalities already had the power, under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1944, to prepare planning schemes for their own territories or to join with neighbouring municipalities to prepare joint planning schemes. Thus within any municipal district there are now two bodies with the power to prepare planning schemes—the local Council and the Board.

Although the Town and Country Planning (Metropolitan Area) Act 1949, which defines the Board's planning powers and responsibilities, provided the machinery for liaison between the Board and the respective Councils, it

did not in any way limit the ambit of the Board's responsibilities, nor define the respective spheres of responsibility of the Councils and the Board.

From the inception of the work it was apparent, therefore, that the scope of this planning scheme would require careful consideration. In superimposing on the existing planning powers of the individual municipalities, the preparation by the Board of a planning scheme for the Melbourne metropolitan area, Parliament was obviously actuated by the belief that however competent municipalities might be in preparing planning schemes for their areas, the problems of the metropolitan area could not be effectively co-ordinated and solved by the individual approach of the forty-two municipal Councils whose districts, either wholly or in part, are within the metropolitan boundary. Parliament realised that for an effective solution of metropolitan problems a unified and co-ordinated study of the area as a whole would be necessary, and that until this was done planning by individual municipalities could not be fully effective.

It was apparent, therefore, that the Board's planning scheme should be considered as a framework into which the planning schemes of the local municipalities should fit, and that it should be confined to metropolitan problems and should not encroach on the field of detailed community planning, except where this might be essential for the completion of the broader framework. This initial conception

“Well tended spacious parks encompass the centre”



of the limitation of the Board's responsibility has been fully borne out as detailed study of the various problems has proceeded.

Therefore, the scheme which is now presented does not attempt to do more than establish and provide for the broad pattern of metropolitan needs. Matters which are essentially of local importance have been left to be dealt with in subsequent planning schemes, whether prepared by a central authority or by individual municipalities.

The area for which the scheme has been prepared, with boundaries of the various municipalities and of the statistical districts which have been used to facilitate the understanding of this large area of 684 square miles, are shown in map 1.

MAJOR PROBLEMS OF CIVIC DEVELOPMENT

The numerous problems associated with the development and growth of a modern city result both from the expansion of various community activities and from the changing ideals and conditions arising from the evolution of human knowledge and attainment. Together they form a composite problem in which each individual aspect is affected by and, in its turn, affects others.

The first step in preparing this planning scheme, therefore, was to carry out comprehensive and thorough surveys to determine conditions as they now exist within the metropolitan area, and to obtain an understanding of the various community activities likely to influence and to be affected by the scheme. The thoroughness of this investigation is shown by the details of the work recorded in the companion volume "Surveys and Analysis," which should be read in conjunction with this report.

From the many problems disclosed by these investigations certain major ones emerge. These, because of their magnitude and importance, have largely determined the principles which have been followed in preparing the scheme. They may be summarised as follows—

- (a) The sprawling, low density development, which has added substantially to the cost of providing the normal utility services, to the cost of transportation, and to the time taken to travel from one part of the city to another.
- (b) The decline in the residential amenities of the inner suburban area due to the obsolescence and low standard of many homes and to the encroachment of industry and other non-residential uses.
- (c) The expansion of industry and its guidance to locations which will be convenient for both industrialists and workers, and which will bring about an adjustment of the present unbalanced distribution of places of residence and work.
- (d) The congestion resulting from the increasing concentration of activities within and adjoining the central business area.

- (e) The increasing difficulty in the movement of people and goods throughout the planning area due partly to the increase in the population, but more particularly to the increasing use of motor vehicles.
- (f) The difficulty of securing sufficiently large sites for schools within convenient distances of the children's homes and for hospitals in suitable locations.
- (g) The lack of sufficient parklands and playing fields to meet the needs of the growing population with its love of outdoor recreation.
- (h) The protection of the civilian population from the effects of aerial warfare.

All these aspects of our civic development are interdependent and together form a problem of considerable complexity. No individual component can be solved without considering its effect on the others. It is essential, therefore, to establish broad guiding principles to provide a firm foundation on which to base the detailed proposals for civic betterment. The planning scheme now presented has been based on six fundamental conceptions, namely:—

- (a) Limitation of the urban area to bring the sprawling development under control.
- (b) Zoning of specific areas for various community uses in accordance with their needs and in proper relation to one another.
- (c) Decentralisation within the urban area of industry and of certain activities of the central business area.
- (d) Provision for an arterial and secondary road system capable of permitting safe, expeditious and uninterrupted movement of the greatly increased volume of road traffic which must accompany an inevitable increase in population and increased use of motor vehicles.
- (e) Reservation for public use of adequate areas to meet such community needs as schools, hospitals, shopping, parks and the like.
- (f) Preservation wherever practicable of those opportunities which now exist for carrying out such public works as appear necessary for our future civic development and for such remodelling of the existing urban structure as would appear to be necessary to reasonably provide for anticipated community needs in the foreseeable future.

In applying these principles to solving Melbourne's problems three factors must be kept in mind. Firstly, the buildings, roads, bridges and other public works form an asset that, on economic grounds, should be preserved wherever possible. A community can afford to employ only a certain proportion of its work force on building and civic development. Therefore any scheme for civic improvement must avoid unnecessary and excessive destruction of useful assets and employment of an undue proportion of the total work force. This viewpoint is reflected in the provisions of the planning scheme, which have been based on the fundamental conception that, while idealism must not be ignored, the carrying out of contemplated works must be practicable, both physically and financially.