

Chapter 1

SURVEY METHODS AND PROCEDURE

For any planning scheme to be successful in this country, it must be based on the recognition of three fundamental facts. The first is that Australia is a free community in which people can still, within reason, come and go and organise their own affairs as they please; the second is that Australia's development and standard of living is still largely dependent on overseas trade; and the third that Australia is a relatively young nation of limited financial resources whose geographic, economic and social characteristics differ considerably from those in many other countries. Economic and social factors will determine the overall size, character and needs of any Australian city. A planning scheme can merely provide for such needs in the best possible manner, and, so long as people are free to choose where and how they live and work this must continue to be so. The accurate interpretation of people's wants, therefore, is fundamental to any successful planning scheme in a democratic community such as ours.

This is not peculiar to Australia, but is essential to all town planning work. Thus, over the years, with the development of the art and science of town planning, there has emerged, as a distinct step in the work, the process now referred to as the "Basic Survey." This involves the investigation and analysis of every facet of community life, so that before any solution of the problems of a city is propounded, there shall have been established a complete understanding of the city both as a physical and a social entity. Only a brief reflection on the complexity of city life is necessary to appreciate that, to arrive at such an understanding, a careful analysis of all the relevant facts is essential. This is the very foundation on which schemes for civic development must be based. If the foundation is weak, the structure cannot be stable.

Realising this, the initial step in the work of preparing a planning scheme for the Melbourne metropolitan area was to set up an organisation to delve and probe into our community activities, to assemble and analyse such data as was available, and to carry out such further investigations as might be necessary to assemble the facts about the city and its people. Of even greater importance was the need for drawing correct conclusions from the mass of information assembled. Every care has been taken to ensure, as far as

is possible, that the facts collected are correct and that the interpretation of these facts is sound and conclusive.

To guide the organising and carrying out of subsequent more detailed investigations, and to ensure that a correct perspective was obtained of the character and importance of Melbourne in relation to the State of Victoria and the Commonwealth of Australia, a study of the past growth and development of the city was first undertaken. The next stage was to ascertain and analyse the facts about the city itself — the physical facts relating to the land and its resources and the economic and social facts concerning the people and their activities. The information required fell into these three broad groups:

- (a) The physical characteristics and resources of the planning area.
- (b) The conditions of existing development.
- (c) The activities of the people and their likely future needs.

The physical characteristics, such as extent, topography, geology and climate, were already recorded and immediately available. They had only to be assembled in suitable form.

An appreciation of the natural resources and of the agricultural potentialities required special inquiries and field surveys. Assistance was sought from officials of the Mines Department, quarry owners and others regarding the mineral resources of the planning area. This was supplemented by a questionnaire circulated to municipal councils and to private organisations concerned in the winning of materials from the ground. From these sources it was possible to assess the extent and importance of the various deposits within the area. The agricultural survey involved discussions with officials of the Department of Agriculture, with merchants and with primary producers, from which it was possible to ascertain the present capacity and likely future importance of the planning area for agricultural purposes.

Since planning is a process by which the use of land is controlled and regulated, it was essential before any planning could commence to know the purposes for which every piece of land within the planning area is used today. To determine and record the conditions of existing development over an area of some 230 square miles of closely settled land and some 450 square miles of rural land presented a major

physical task. The information was obtained by detailed inspection in the field supplemented by up-to-date aerial photographs of the whole area prepared at the Board's request by the Department of Lands. The field work was mostly carried out during the long summer vacation of 1950-51, with the aid of some thirty University students under the direction of the Board's planning officers. In the three months during which most of this work was done every street and lane in the urban area was inspected and its existing use recorded. In the central business area, bounded by Spring, Flinders, Spencer and Lonsdale Streets, where the mixture of uses within individual buildings presented special problems, a more detailed survey was carried out. By this means the use of all floor space through this area was ascertained and a statistical basis established for assessing the volume of employment in it.

All this information concerning present development was recorded by means of colours on a series of plans, a task of considerable magnitude which took many months. This work, as well as many other aspects, was greatly facilitated by the comprehensive series of maps and plans which were available. The detailed maps which the Board already had for its other responsibilities contained much useful and essential information; but these only covered the area controlled by the Board for water, sewerage and drainage purposes (approximately a 13 miles radius). For other reasons also these maps were not entirely adequate for planning purposes. The Survey Branch of the Board, therefore, prepared an entirely new set of plans covering the whole metropolitan area. As a result, there were available complete and up-to-date plans to scales of 400, 800, 2000, 4000 and 6000 feet to the inch, which supplemented the existing more detailed 40 and 160 feet to the inch plans of the urban area. This comprehensive series of plans proved of immense value throughout the planning work.

Information concerning the activities of the people and their likely future needs was not so readily obtained, and required much painstaking investigation, research and analysis, and a great deal of consultation with people in many walks of life. To obtain this essential information a comprehensive series of surveys was carried out covering such diverse fields as the structure, size and needs of the future population, the requirements for industry, housing, shopping, education and culture, health, recreation, the public utility services, public transportation and road communications.

The methods used to obtain this information naturally varied according to the subject matter and the degree to which information was already available. In most instances a combination of three basic sources of information was necessary, namely,

- (a) Official Statistics and Reports.
- (b) Information already co-ordinated by individual authorities or organisations.
- (c) Special field surveys to obtain information not available by other means.

In undertaking each survey, every effort was made to work as closely as possible with the various public and private authorities concerned. A feature of this work was the splendid co-operation offered by all sections of the community, both in supplying information, and frequently in the final assessment of facts. Apart from co-ordinating the best opinions on each subject, this proved to be an excellent medium for creating real understanding and goodwill, and in developing a feeling of active participation in this work. In addition, the various survey techniques used by leading British and American planning authorities were carefully studied with a view to using those methods considered most suitable for Melbourne. Generally the procedure was first to find out what information was readily available and then to decide what additional information was necessary and the best method of obtaining it.

A considerable proportion of basic information was obtained by special field surveys, several of which involved sample surveys, interviews and questionnaires. The principal sample survey, which was conducted on behalf of the Board by the Gallup Poll Organisation, involved a questionnaire⁽¹⁾ of 60 questions and interviews with some 4,250 households in selected small groups spread throughout all municipalities in the metropolitan area. This alone provided a wealth of basic information on people's habits and daily movements from which more detailed studies of Melbourne's social needs and metropolitan traffic problems were made possible.

The individual surveys, the sources of information, the methods by which it was obtained, and the data which were assembled are discussed in detail under the appropriate headings later in this report. These involved discussions with officials of Commonwealth and State Government departments, municipal councils, public utility undertakings, the Chambers of Commerce and Manufactures, with professional organisations, industrialists, shopkeepers, merchants and other business people, with organisations and individuals concerned with housing and the various aspects of education, culture, public health and recreation, with sporting bodies, with transport officials and with members of the general public.

In all this work the basic approach was the same. Firstly, to record and analyse the information obtained; secondly, from this analysis, to assess the existing deficiencies and establish standards for future development, and thirdly to estimate future needs in terms of land requirements. A planning scheme is primarily designed to regulate the use of land and the results of all surveys and analysis must eventually be expressed in these terms.

One of the most striking things that quickly became evident in the course of the work was the lack of information concerning the city as a metropolitan unit. Many individual authorities and business organisations have adequate information concerning their own particular functions, but in general there is a lack of co-ordinated information about the

(1) See Appendix II.