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Dear Lissa,

### **Bayside City Council Submission to the SRL Precinct Discussion Paper**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) Precinct Discussions Paper and develop a shared vision for the SRL Cheltenham Precinct.

The SRL is a major project which will transform Melbourne's public transport system, particularly the way in which residents and commuters currently live, work and utilise activity centres and neighbourhoods surrounding the six SRL precincts.

As outlined within Council's submission, Bayside City Council is generally in agreement and supports the intent of the urban design priorities for the Cheltenham SRL precinct. Further comments have been made within Council's submission relating to more site-specific outcomes to be considered as part of the next stages of the SRL's precinct planning process to ensure the precinct area and the ultimate station design successfully responds to Council and community aspirations.

Council would like to thank the SRLA for considering this submission and welcomes the opportunity to elaborate further on these matters as part of the next steps in the precinct planning process for the SRL Cheltenham Precinct.

Should you wish to discuss Bayside's submission, please contact Rachael Hudson, Strategic Planning Coordinator on 03 9599 4804 or [rhudson@bayside.vic.gov.au](mailto:rhudson@bayside.vic.gov.au).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kelly Archibald', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kelly Archibald  
**Manager Urban Strategy**

Enc: Bayside City Council's Submission to SRL Precincts Discussion Paper

Our Planet, Our People, Our  
Place, Our Promise



# **Bayside City Council**

## **Submission to Suburban Rail Loop Precincts Discussion Paper**

**October 2023**

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Bayside City Council proudly acknowledges the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land, and we pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Council acknowledges the Bunurong's continuing relationship to the land and waterways and respects that their connection and spiritual identity is maintained through ancient ceremonies, songlines, dance, art and living culture.

Council pays tribute to the invaluable contributions of the Bunurong and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island elders who have guided and continue to guide the work we do.

## **Introduction**

Bayside City Council (Council) appreciates the opportunity offered by the Suburban Rail Loop Authority (SRLA) to make a submission to the Precinct Discussions paper (the Paper) and develop a shared vision for the SRL Cheltenham Precinct. This submission will concentrate on providing feedback on the Cheltenham Precinct.

The Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) is a major project which will transform Melbourne's public transport system, particularly the way in which residents and commuters currently live, work and utilise activity centres and neighbourhoods surrounding the six SRL precincts. The true benefits of this project may not be evident for 20 to 30 years. However, metropolitan strategic planning is about thinking ahead and planning for the needs and benefit of future Victorians.

Overall, Council is generally in agreement and supports the intent of the urban design priorities for the Cheltenham precinct. However, the Paper is very high level, and does not include the detail to determine how these will be achieved. Further comments have been made within this submission relating to more site-specific outcomes to be considered as part of the next stages of the SRL's precinct planning process to ensure the precinct area and the ultimate station design successfully responds to Council and community aspirations.

Council would like to thank the SRLA for considering this submission and would welcome the opportunity to elaborate further on these matters as part of the next steps in the precinct planning process for the SRL Cheltenham Precinct.

## **Background**

The City of Bayside is located 16km south-east of Melbourne along the coastline of Port Phillip Bay. The municipality is characterised by its stunning foreshores, beautiful parks, open spaces and vibrant retail centres.

Bayside's 107,541 residents enjoy the leafy surrounds of the municipality and have identified the close proximity to the beach, access to open space and a strong sense of community as key factors for living in Bayside.

## Our Vision

**Bayside City Council's vision is to:**

Partner with our community to protect and care for the community of life in Bayside making an inclusive, active, healthy, connected and creative experience for all.

This vision forms Council's response to our community's expectations and our shared priorities for the next four years.

It also represents our strongly held belief that we represent a highly engaged and forward-thinking community; a community that expects us to lead and influence change on the big issues that affect all of us in Bayside and the broader global system.

**We will deliver this through a focus on:**



### Our Planet

Lead better, smarter and sustainable futures



### Our People

Nurture all people and thriving healthy communities



### Our Place

Foster Bayside's liveability, open space and exceptional places



### Our Promise

We promise open and accountable civic leadership

Many Bayside households are family households (36.5 per cent) comprising couples with children. This is followed by couples without children (24.2 per cent) and lone person households (23.3 per cent) with this number expected to increase over the next four years with an ageing population. Bayside is an 'older' community compared to metropolitan Melbourne with the average age of 44 years compared to 36 years in metropolitan Melbourne. There is a substantially higher percentage of aged persons in Bayside (85 years and over) when compared to metropolitan Melbourne. However Bayside has fewer younger adults (25 to 34 years) residing in the area, as reports show those aged 25-34 tend to leave Bayside seeking more affordable housing or areas closer to work and entertainment opportunities.

Overall, the Bayside community is relatively advantaged in socio-economic terms with 35.8% of households earning \$3,000 or more per week. However, it is recognised that Bayside has small scattered areas experiencing substantial disadvantage, which are masked by the affluence across the municipality. There are 652 government managed households in Bayside, located across 18 sites. 46% of residents living in public housing are over 66 years old. Almost all disadvantaged areas in Bayside are public housing estates with most residents receiving a pension or benefit as their income sources. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in the number of people with a disability over the next four years in Bayside.

Over 13,923 residents reported to have a disability and 4,213 reported that they needed assistance in their day-to-day lives due to a disability, long-term health condition or old age. Currently, 9,800 Bayside residents are also providing unpaid care to family members or others because of a disability or illness.

Council has adopted structure plans in place for all activity centres within Bayside. These plans have been produced to implement the vision, objectives, and strategies for each activity centre within the Bayside Planning Scheme.

Building on the strengths of each area, the activity centres will accommodate for higher density residential living, as they are well-serviced and connected to public transport, making these centres the most accessible locations within the municipality to work, live and shop. This higher level of change in the activity centres supports the more incremental level of change that is envisaged in other parts of the municipality that do not benefit from the same level of access to services.

In Bayside's Minimal Residential Growth Areas (zoned Neighbourhood Residential Zone), building heights are capped at 2 storeys, recognising the Bayside community's desire to protect the low rise, leafy character of the established residential areas whilst enabling a mix of housing types including detached houses, town houses and low rise apartments.

In the Housing Growth Areas, locations that are in close proximity to public transport, shops and services, permissible building heights range from 3 stories (generally in the residential areas), up to 6 storeys in the commercial areas of activity centres.

Bayside acknowledges that in Australia, the need for affordable housing has never been more urgent. For many jurisdictions across the State, now is the time to consider adopting robust equitable housing policies that build permanently affordable housing stock and in turn create inclusive communities.

The primary segment of the community that require access to affordable housing are those that fall within the low and very-low income households. This can often compromise people in lone person or single parent households, older people, persons with a disability, people born in non-English or English as a second language-speaking families and people outside of paid employment.

A household can access affordable housing if they meet the household income thresholds that are set annually by Order of the Governor in Council. Occupants can be at any stage of their lives and in need of affordable housing. As a result, dwellings should be designed to adapt the changing needs of its occupants and priced at a level which is affordable relative to the income of its occupants.

### **Council's position – SRL Cheltenham Precinct**

The completion of the SRL project is a major infrastructure development which requires continued and effective stakeholder engagement, particularly with affected Council's and community.

Council has utilised this Paper as a platform to reiterate and reinforce previous considerations put forth to the SRL Authority by Council through Bayside's Advocacy Action Plan 2021 and as part of Council's submission to SRL Inquiry and Advisory Committee. This submission also discusses other considerations in response to the key themes and draft vision for the Cheltenham SRL precinct as set within the Paper and how these can further align with Council's strategic framework and directions.

### **Bayside Advocacy Action Plan 2021**

Upon announcement that the first stage of the SRL would be the south-east segment from Cheltenham to Box Hill, Council prepared an Advocacy Action Plan. The Action Plan outlined the outcomes Council is seeking for the Bayside community to ensure strong input to the SRLA to inform Council's advocacy throughout the project. The plan outlines the focus of Council's efforts, actions and engagement, with the following 5 key objectives being set:

- Protecting community amenity during the various stages of construction
- Delivering an integrated transport system
- Delivering a precinct that responds to the challenges of the future
- Effective collaboration and transparent communication and engagement
- Maximising economic and social benefits

The advocacy priorities continue to be relevant to the current stage of delivery, being the precinct planning stage, and also align with the Bayside Community Vision 2050 and Council adopted Strategic Plans and Policies.

The Advocacy Action Plan alongside Council's adopted Strategic Plans and Policies helped inform Council's submission to the SRL Inquiry and Advisory Committee in 2022.

### **Bayside City Council Previous submission – Suburban Rail Loop East Inquiry and Advisory Committee**

Council has previously made a public submission to the Suburban Rail Loop East Inquiry and Advisory Committee appointed by the Minister for Planning to consider the environmental effects, draft planning scheme amendment and public submissions, and inquiry into the environmental effects of the SRL proposal.

Bayside's submission provided support for the project in recognition of the broader benefits that SRL East will bring to future generations. Support however was not unrestrained, and the following improvements were put forward for consideration as part of the submission and hearing process:

- securing the provision of 100 per cent renewable energy across all Project construction and operation phases
- seeking suitable emissions reduction targets to be introduced with annual reporting of progress across construction and operation
- seeking for suitable design and procurement of low carbon materials and recyclable materials as a priority
- expressing concern about the loss of open space within the reserve and the lack of certainty about where replacement of open space would be provided
- identifying relevant local policies were elements of the project required further refinement to take account of those policies
- supporting the submissions made by Kingston and the evidence and changes proposed by their consultants
- outlining the importance of the Sir William Fry Reserve as an integral open space for our community and how the Cheltenham site development will impact on Bayside residents in proximity to the site

- highlighting the potential impact that the project could have in existing ground water bores in this area
- proposing improvements to the urban design outcomes, access, connectivity and mobility around the station and the integration with other modes of transport and the southland railway station.

These improvements continue to be relevant and should be considered as part of the precinct structure planning process for Cheltenham. Council will continue to advocate for the consideration of the aforementioned improvements through this upcoming process.

### **Council's response to the SRL Precinct Discussions Paper**

Planning for the development of a new, more connected and efficient transport network which seeks to integrate and build on the existing transport networks and activity centres will be challenging and must be considerate of the current and future community that live, work and travel within these neighbourhoods.

The Draft 2050 Ambition Statement for Cheltenham reads as follows:

*“Cheltenham will become a centre of well-connected shopping, employment and housing opportunities supported by a thriving community and entertainment hub with attractive public spaces for its workers and residents.”*

This statement is generally supported by Council and aligns with Council's adopted Strategic Plans and Policies.

Five key priorities have been established by the Paper in relation to the Cheltenham Precinct. Council is generally supportive of the priorities and future opportunities for Cheltenham. But it will be the finer detail of built form outcomes, siting, design and function of the precinct that will ultimately determine their impact.

It is understood the Precincts Discussion Paper is intended to provide a high level overview of the priorities of the plan. However, the success of the achievement of these priorities will be in the detail. Council considers the use of quantitative targets and requirements (such as percentages of canopy cover, green cover or open space) important to the achievement of these priorities. It is considered they will provide certainty and measurability to ensure the SRL precincts are delivered in alignment with Local and State Policy, and best practice.

The key priorities and their relevance to Council strategy is outlined below –

### **Proposed Key Priority 1: Access to distinctive and high-quality environments**

Access to distinctive and high-quality environments is a priority that aligns with Council's adopted Plans and Policies. The Bayside community highly values its low rise, leafy character of the established residential areas whilst enabling a mix of housing types including detached houses, town houses and low-rise apartments.

The increased planting of canopy trees, understorey and middlestorey vegetation within the public and private realm is a key priority of Bayside's Urban Forest Strategy 2022-2040 which seeks to increase canopy cover to reach 30% by 2040.

These interventions will help to mitigate the urban heat island effects and other impacts of climate change.

To achieve this key priority, the SRL precinct needs to ensure the retention of existing vegetation and tree canopy cover and the provision of new and enhanced understorey and middlestorey vegetation and tree canopy cover is appropriately planned for in the design, construction and delivery phases of the SRL Cheltenham precinct.

The Cheltenham precinct will likely encompass a variety of land uses, including the Bayside Business District (BBD) which currently lacks distinctive landscaping outcomes due to the nature of the commercial and light industrial developments within the area. Enhanced landscape outcomes to improve the characteristics of this area and its connection to the SRL Cheltenham station would be a highly desirable outcome of the precinct structure planning process.

### **Proposed Key Priority 2: Social connectedness and wellbeing**

Bayside's community is ageing and increasing the opportunities for social connection is a key goal of Bayside's *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP)* 2021-2025. As raised within the MPHWP, Bayside residents have previously expressed the importance of opportunities for establishing social connections and the delivery of social prescription projects including intergenerational activities and support for community connections that are inclusive.

The following 4 objectives are listed within the MPHWP under Goal 1 – 'Connected and thriving community' and are relevant to this Key Priority:

1. Improve community mental wellbeing and resilience
2. Drive opportunities that build social networks and community connections
3. Increase and support volunteerism
4. Reduce social isolation and loneliness

Bayside currently runs specialist services such as the Black Rock Activity Centre which offers older residents the chance to connect and come together for social days out within the Cheltenham precinct. The provision of similar specialist services or intergenerational services and facilities within the Cheltenham SRL precinct would provide an opportunity to build social connections and activities for the immediate and surrounding community.

Supporting social connectedness and wellbeing should also include the option for residents to age in place and to have ability to live in medium and higher density developments that appropriately support this. The Bayside Housing Strategy 2019 'encourages a diversity of housing to meet the current and future needs of the population'. The Bayside population is ageing and as our elderly population increases, as will the need for residential aged care facilities, universally designed apartments and support services to be located within Activity Centres and Housing Growth Areas where residents can benefit from good access to public transport, shops and services.

Through the precinct planning process, Council will be engaging with the SRLA to advocate for opportunities to enhance community services and the inclusion of aged care facilities, universally designed and affordable housing within the Cheltenham

precinct, to ensure the ongoing social connectedness and wellbeing of current and future residents.

Council notes Victoria's Housing Statement, which details planning reforms to facilitate affordable housing. Any precinct plan should identify areas that could facilitate housing growth to support social connectedness and wellbeing through the provision of affordable housing.

### **Proposed Key Priority 3: More jobs and employment**

The Paper provides detail to the existing surrounding locality for the proposed Cheltenham SRL station, being its close proximity to three existing train stations (Highett, Southland and Cheltenham), Southland Shopping Centre and Nepean Highway as well as the Bayside Business District (BBD).

A key priority for the precinct planning for Cheltenham will be to ensure greater connection is made between the new Station, Southland Shopping Centre and the BBD whilst still providing a distinguishment between the two areas.

The BBD should continue to be a focal point for business development and encouraged as an employment cluster with its proximity to the new station. Residential redevelopment in the BBD is not encouraged by Council and there are existing policies in place in the Bayside Planning Scheme to discourage residential development within the area.

The Cheltenham SRL Precinct Plan is an opportunity to enhance the BBD, and embed employment opportunities within the catchment of the SRL – ensuring the maximum benefit of the investment in the SRL project.

### **Proposed Key Priority 4: Increased cycling and walking connections**

Increased cycling and walking connections and ensuring this integrates with the existing transport networks must be a key priority of the Cheltenham precinct planning and delivery. Improving access to public transport for pedestrian and cyclist will also likely in turn provide greater use of this public transport.

Improving existing and future access to bus, footpaths and bicycle networks as well as the frequency of bus and train services are all major goals outlined within the Bayside Integrated Transport Strategy 2018-2028 (ITS). The ITS covers all forms of mobility, including public transport, walking cycling, freight, private vehicles, and the street network.

Bayside is in need of more sustainable transport options, particularly cycling and public transport connections, from east to west of the municipality. Improving cycling infrastructure between Cheltenham and Sandringham is an action identified within the Bayside Bicycle Action Plan 2019 and positively contributes towards addressing the climate emergency.

Council consider the connections between the SRL Cheltenham Station, and existing Sandringham Station crucial in the delivery of the SRL project. Ensuring a connection between the Sandringham Activity Centre will ensure the benefits of the SRL is extended into broader Bayside area.

Council recently completed its Bayside Active Transport Connections – Connectivity Report & Implementation (report). Whilst this report is at a greater level of detail than the Discussion Paper, this should be used to inform the subsequent Precinct Planning work.

The following areas within or adjacent to the Cheltenham Precinct Plan were identified as priority for improvements to active transport –

- Cheltenham Activity Centre (Charman Road and Park Road)
- Cheltenham Industrial Precinct (between Bay Road, George Street, Tulip Street, Park Road and Jack Road)
- Highett Station and Shopping Centre precinct
- Westfield Southland (including Sir William Fry Reserve).

Detailed interventions were identified in the report for key corridors leading to the Cheltenham Precinct Plan area. These interventions should inform any transport analysis undertaken in the preparation of the precinct plans. A copy of the report has been attached for information.

### **Proposed Key Priority 5: Greater use of public transport**

Increased use of public transport will be felt when barriers to utilise public transport are minimised or altogether removed. Safety of all users is an important factor in planning and managing our transport network. Unless our transport network becomes safer, the safety of our transport users will be a barrier to an uptake in more environmentally sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling.

Council seeks improved bus connections to the SRL Cheltenham station from key activity centres within Bayside. Improvements to the bus services should include increasing frequency of service and more priority bus lanes. In addition, the above-mentioned interventions improve the accessibility, safety and amenity for people walking and/or riding to and from the Cheltenham SRL station.

The Highett Structure Plan, The Bayside Active Transport Connections Study 2023 and the Bayside Integrated Transport Strategy 2018 – 2028 all identify the importance of improving active transport connections and accessibility between open spaces, Bay Road, the Bayside Business District and Highett Station. Improving local accessibility will help support the proposed priority outcomes. The SRLA concept currently offers limited walking and cycling connectivity beyond the project area, missing the opportunities to create efficient and inviting walking and cycling connections to the wider area.