



# Town and Country Planning Association Bulletin

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## REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS PROCEDURES

The Department of Infrastructure has established a taskforce to coordinate a review of environment assessment procedures under the Environment Effects Act 1978 and to prepare an Issues and Options Paper for public comment.. The specific aims of the review are to:

- ◆ Review current procedures
- ◆ Develop improved procedures for environmental assessment
- ◆ Evaluate the need for, and appropriate scope and form of, environmental assessment of strategic proposals that may have significant environmental impacts or implications.

An independent advisory committee is to be established to consider public submissions and recommend reform of assessment procedures. The discussion paper is scheduled for release in mid-2002.

More information and a copy of Bulletin No. 1 can be found on the website [www.nre.vic.gov.au/ees](http://www.nre.vic.gov.au/ees) or by contacting the Department of Infrastructure. EA Review Taskforce, Level 20, 80 Collins St, Melbourne, fax 9655 6919.

## Commonwealth Games Arrangements Bill

Ironically, while this review is in progress, on 21 August 2001 the Government introduced its legislative framework for the preparation for, and staging of, the Commonwealth Games which exempts all Games' projects from the Environment Effects Act 1978.

In legislation which is reminiscent of the Australian Grand Prix Act 1994, Commonwealth Games venues and "designated access areas" are exempt from "any planning scheme", the Planning and Environment Act 1987, Building Act 1993, Coastal Management Act 1995, Heritage Act 1995.

The Government is defending these provisions by *inter alia* pointing to the provisions in the Bill for the Minister to establish Advisory Committees which consider matters (which might include planning, environment and heritage issues) relating to the development of facilities which would be referred to it, and which would carry out consultation if required to do so by the Minister.

The Premier has described these as virtually alternative compliance mechanisms to existing legislation. In reality, the advisory committee process is entirely discretionary

and has side-stepped the accountability of the formal planning process.

The TCPA finds it disturbing that once again a "major event" which is still over 5 years off would require such fast-tracking of projects. It is particularly disturbing because all proposed developments affect the inner city and should require detailed planning and environment effects assessment.

The siting of the Games village, which includes a significant part destined as long term "social housing" and is expected to affect land previously excised from Royal Park, should be subject to more open and accountable processes. The developer is not required to commence construction work until March 2003. Question marks hang over all three possible sites and even the need for a single dedicated single village. There is clearly potential for using other facilities. Redevelopment of the Docklands area and other inner-city brown-field sites is taking place, with the possibility of an over-supply of new residential units in the short-term.

## Draft Strategy for Open Space in Metropolitan Melbourne

Signatories of the Parklands Code (the TCPA was one of the original 45 groups), which was launched in October 1995, have been waiting expectantly for the release of the promised legislated Parklands Code by the Bracks Government.

One year after the draft was first expected, the Department of Environment and Conservation released a draft strategy, *Linking People and Spaces*. This is available for public comment until 30 November 2001.

The document presents some brief "Management Objectives" and a general strategy, which constitutes a set of guidelines and a type of code of practice, which is the government's interpretation of its commitment. The bulk of the strategy is a set of strategic directions and specific proposals for the Inner, West, North, East and South-East Regions of Metropolitan Melbourne. TCPA members are urged to examine closely proposals which directly affect their region.

Copies of the Draft Strategy can be obtained from the Park Victoria's website ([www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)) or by contacting the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963.

## REVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN TRAVEL DEVELOPMENTS IN DUTCH CITIES AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO MELBOURNE

The Economic Council of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) report entitled *National Peer Review: The Netherlands* (2001) was prepared specifically to provide advice on European best practice for the transport ministers who are responsible for the development of better passenger transport systems across an enlarged 30 nation Europe, for reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emission, and decoupling the demand for increased mobility from increased resource consumption. This Review is relevant to Australia, which has observer status at the ECMT meetings.

The Review found that the Dutch approach integrates transport, land use, housing and environmental planning with its Road safety policy in a way that has constrained the growth of car dependence to a manageable level. Since 1989 there has been an increase in public transport from 17 billion passenger-km travelled to 22.8 billion, and an increase in the railways' modal share of all passenger-km from 10% in 1989 to 12% in 1999. 25% of all trips were made by bicycle in the year 2000. The review makes it clear that bicycle transport is part of the serious business on the ECMT agenda and is a key factor in the growth of rail travel.

### ***Rail/Bicycle Travel***

Approximately 30% of Dutch rail patrons ride to their station of departure by bicycle and 10% ride from their station of arrival by bicycle. Commuters have access to 271,000 parking spaces including 128,000 secure storage spaces. Theft of cycles remains a major problem in the Netherlands, but the big difference between Australia and the Netherlands is that the Dutch railways agencies want to keep their bike-rail patrons and have plans in place to combat bicycle theft. They plan to spend \$350 million on secure bicycle parking at stations between 2000 and 2006.

The Peer Review has commended this Dutch initiative, but does suggest that marketing should be carefully targeted at current car users. This makes good sense because over 85% of Dutch car users own and use bicycles from time to time.

### ***Relevance of the ECMT Peer Review to Melbourne***

Melbourne has a large target group for switching from car to bike/rail. Around 40% of Melbourne's car users own and use bicycles, and approximately 2.3 million people live within three kilometres of a railway station. Of the 29,000 people who drive and park cars at rail stations, around 40-45% travel less than 2 km, a very easy cycling distance. Of the 190 suburban rail stations, around 100 can be accessed from quiet residential streets on one side or both sides of the rail lines. While only 12% of Melbourne's population lives within convenient walking distance from a station, 81% lives within easy cycling distance. This potential for bike/rail is recognised in the Australian National Bicycle Strategy, but planning

opportunity is currently being ignored in Victoria.

After providing Australia's first bicycle lockers in the 1980s, the Melbourne rail system managers have failed to implement strategies to grow bike/rail patronage. Planning was not helped in the 1990s when VicRoads took over vehicle parking at stations for several years. Currently Melbourne has 2,500 bicycle parking spaces and 630 bicycle lockers at stations (or one for every 48 car parking spaces).

Cyclists are faced with a very high rate of bicycle theft and vandalism; very few are leaving them at stations. The total proportion of bike/rail travel is insignificant and is not growing; the number of bicycles parked dropped from 2,150 in 1981 to around 500 in 1994 and of these half were in bicycle lockers.

Over a decade when the Netherlands has increased levels of rail and bike/rail travel, in Melbourne there has been a large decrease in the modal share of rail travel and no increase in bike/rail travel. The Victorian government has no transport plan that will change these unsustainable trends.

Perhaps the most important lesson from the Peer Review is the need for inter-State and inter-country cooperation in experimentation, and the sharing of experiences and ideas. For Australian rail systems and transport strategies, the way to start that process is to consider the current state of integrated transport policy, where we now have only 3,500 secure bicycle parking spaces for all urban rail systems in Australia, one for every 36 in the Netherlands. As the total Dutch and Australian urban populations are comparable in size, the number of secure storage places is a good indicator of the relative importance placed on the bicycle as an access mode to stations by the two rail systems.

We need state and inter-state experiments on the different systems, such as bike hire at tourist destinations, mass-produced folding bikes sold by the rail authorities at cost, to current car park and ride patrons and cyclists who never used the rail system before, to raise bike-rail travel. A new Dutch initiative is to provide free bikes to rail patrons who park their cars or bikes at end of line stations but need a bike to access destinations when they get to the premium stations in the inner and middle suburbs. In Australian cities accessing trains by bicycle at the home station and the destination station has the potential to greatly enlarge the rail catchment by encouraging more cross suburban trips. Bike/rail travel is the only sustainable low cost option for significantly increasing rail patronage.

The Review can be obtained through the website of the Economic Council of Ministers of Transport, [www.oecd.org/cem](http://www.oecd.org/cem).

### ***TCPA Committee Meetings***

The next meeting will be held at 7.30 pm on Monday, 8th October in the Wunderlich Laboratory, ground floor, Architecture Building, University of Melbourne.

### ***Address for Correspondence***

The Secretary, Town and Country Planning Association, Box 312, Collins Street West PO, Melbourne 8007.