



Town and Country Planning Association Bulletin

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

TCPA Committee for 2003

Single nominations were once again received for the following positions:

President:	Ray Walford
Vice-President:	Alan Parker
Secretary:	David Littlewood
Treasurer:	Peter Hill

The re-elected office holders were heartened by the good attendance at the AGM, but are now very concerned at the lack of expressed interest in any of the general committee positions. As the previous Bulletin noted, the present committee constitutes a bare quorum and leaves no room for the inevitable absences and sickness. The Committee has the power to co-opt and is very keen to hear from any interested member.

General Business

In the context of the sound financial position of the association, the AGM voted unanimously a sum of \$1500 to be donated to the trust fund for the Ledger Prize in urban planning (see Bulletin for Sept-October 2002).

The proposed amendments to the Constitution as circulated were accepted. Copies of the revised constitution will be sent to all members in 2003.

Guest Speaker

It was appropriate that the Australian Institute of Urban Studies, which has recently become a member of the TCPA, should provide the guest speaker. Lester Townsend, the institute's President, outlined the project to develop an evidence-based guide to good urban planning using the pattern analysis approach (what works and what doesn't).

Noting that writing on urban space tended to be inspirational rather than evidence-based (what works and why), planners needed to have an empirical reference which provided a summary of research data and findings on design patterns (e.g. what patterns provide a liveable environment, what works in medium density, what is the effect of adding a multiple-occupancy lane to a freeway) and behaviour (e.g. what are walking speeds and what patterns have proved to work for walking).

Lester referred to a body of literature which looks at design issues in terms of the body of evidence on the impact of designs. The project was aimed to make evidence-based reality available to planners at the local level. A database will be created, making inaccessible

facts available to practitioners. In the first instance the project needed to develop a conceptual framework before moving to a working content. For this the institute would be seeking sponsorship funding from Councils.

MELBOURNE 2030

TCPA Submission

The TCPA will be making a submission to Melbourne 2030 in February 2003. There is some concern at the short submission time, as well as the too-familiar timing, and the TCPA will comment on this. However, it is assumed that, given the present general nature of the Plan, there will be a series of opportunities to contribute to the development of the Plan.

Members who would like to contribute to the development of our submission or would like to forward comments on the plan for consideration should contact David Littlewood (9534 5379, email david@littlewo.com) or Ray Walford (9817 4684, email raywalford@bigpond.com). As part of the submission preparation process the committee is considering holding a workshop on either Friday 21st or 28th January during the day. Interested members are asked to contact David or Ray.

Local councils are now considering the Plan. It is suggested that members tap into this municipal process, as the response of local government is a key factor in the development and implementation of the Plan.

The Plan and Key Issues

The Committee welcomes the basic objectives of the plan and its commitment to sustainability. However, the plan remains essentially aspirational combined with a set of proposals for the development of more detailed implementation plans in collaboration with local governments. The devil will be in the detail. At the present stage of the plan's development the Committee has decided to concentrate its attention on a critique which focusses on identifying where the plan might fail, the risk factors (what could threaten the strategy's objectives), important gaps, and potential inconsistencies in the present plan. Some of the key issues are:

While three **population growth projections** are presented, Melbourne 2030 in fact is based on one scenario only and provides no basis for its projection. Significant under or over-estimation of projected increases will have a major impact on land consumption and transport planning.

A key component of the plan is a commitment to **improve public transport and to double the percentage of**

motorised vehicle trips by public transport from 9% to 20% trips by 2020; there is also a less specific aspiration to increase the share of non-motorised trips. It is not evident how the figure of 20% was arrived at, and there is a lack of detail as to how it is to be achieved.

The strategy appears to be based on the concentration of urban growth in areas served by high capacity public transport, including Activity Centres, a significantly improved bus network, and some specific proposal for extension of rail and tram services. The Government has still to complete its integrated transport plan or the separate bus, tram and train plans, and the TCPA suspects that the plan does not contain all the major road projects.

The targets are confined to total trip numbers as distinct from trip kilometres. Clearly different trends in the two measures will reflect quite different planning outcomes and cost/benefits for the community. Increased residential densities in the outer suburbs and concentration of services in PAC/MACs are two developments that may encourage increased motorised vehicle trip kilometres.

Nor do the targets take into account multi-modal trips (e.g. walking/cycling and public transport). There is little evidence of a properly funded and coherent integrated alternative transport strategy plan which links the bicycle network with transport nodes. Funding of the bicycle network remains conditional ("resources permitting").

There is no attention to risk management involving new scenarios due to changes in the external environment (unanticipated population increases, oil supply or price crises, new Commonwealth tax policies, fiscal constraints on transport investment).

There are no specific estimates of the infrastructure costs and subsidies required over the next 5 and 10 years to meet the transport strategy objectives or any guidelines on how funding for transport will be allocated and funding needs assessed. The absence of any funding commitments, particularly given the ongoing commitment to major road/freeway links, is of major concern.

There is no detail on any systematic set of incentives/disincentives, which may be needed or proposed to effect changes in travel behaviour (e.g. road pricing mechanisms).

Activity Centres are the key approach to optimum land use for sustainable development. Increased density around activity centres is central to the whole strategy but its success depends on (i) the ability and willingness of local councils to manage community reactions to increased densities and new housing directions, (ii) the character of the activity centre, its interface with sensitive residential areas, and capacity for redevelopment (land costs, market forces, demand for high density housing), and (iii) a planning system which is appropriately framed and backed

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by definitive and implementable policies to give local councils the necessary planning tools and resources.

There are a number of other problems in the Activity Centre approach. First, the trend to concentrate and centralise key private and Commonwealth services will require longer trips and the use of cars unless local and State governments are prepared to ensure there is a full range of services at the lowest level of centres, and deliver on the commitment to significantly improved public transport. Secondly, there is an assumption that clusters of Neighbourhood Activity Centres will support larger ACs. While this is almost a truism, there is a potential danger that the growth of Activity Centres will threaten the viability of the NACs. Finally, successful inner-city NACs and smaller ACs indicate that good access to PT and walking/bike amenities do not guarantee the end of car congestion and excessive demands on parking spaces.

Melbourne 2030 hinges on increased density and optimum use of a finite resource of greenfield and brownfield land. However, the plan contains no targets or indicators of preferred residential densities or guidelines on what are considered to be achievable density targets in the zoned growth and redevelopment areas. Nor does it contain any data on the land available or potential for redevelopment in existing residential and brownfield areas. It remains to be decided where the projected additional 620,000 households will be located.

Improved transport links to regional centres may have unintended consequence, as the availability of cheaper land runs out, to create dormitory towns rather than growth centres for services and employment. Urban growth boundaries and targets for higher densities may need to be imposed on regional centres.

The limits on the supply of land and rising market prices will present a major challenge for affordable housing policies.

AUSLINK GREEN PAPER

The Australian Government's Green Paper *AusLink: Towards the National Land Transport Plan* was released on 7th November. The paper and submission details are available on the Department of Transport and Regional Services website (see Bulletin for July-August 2002). A pdf version has been sent to all members on the email tree. Interested members without access to Internet can use free call 1800 026 222.

The closing date for submissions is 7th February 2003. Any members who would like to contribute to the TCPA's submission or to suggest comments on the Green Paper should contact Alan Parker (tel. 9689, fax 9687 9519, email alanpar@labyrinth.net.au).