



17 June 2016

Michel Masson
Chief Executive Officer
Infrastructure Victoria
Level 34, 121 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

via email

Dear Michel,

SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO 'ALL THINGS CONSIDERED' REPORT

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to Infrastructure Victoria (IV) in response to your 'All Things Considered' report, published last month.

As you would be aware, Victoria's ten regional cities play an important role as service hubs for their own residents and for wider regional communities. With the right investment in infrastructure and services, our cities have the capacity to play a much greater role to alleviate the population pressures experienced in growing capital cities. Our role as a lifestyle alternative for many Victorians can also be expanded.

However, there is currently a well-recognised and significant backlog of infrastructure requirements outside of metropolitan Melbourne. While regional Victoria is home to approximately 20 per cent our state's population, we have regularly received insufficient capital funds to maintain existing infrastructure and deliver all of the projects we need to cater for growth.

REGIONAL CITIES VICTORIA

RCV is a regional leadership group dedicated to building a sustainable Victoria by providing strategic advice, coordination and advocacy to State and Federal Governments to support policies which enable Victoria's regional centres to grow and develop.

Comprising Mayors and CEOs of the 10 largest cities in regional Victoria – Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Horsham, Latrobe, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Warrnambool and Wodonga – RCV is focused on achieving real change in regional Victoria through policy development and active implementation of those policies.

RCV is now widely recognised as a pre-eminent advocacy organisation for regional Victoria. It works closely with both the Government and the Opposition, with various arms of government including Local Government Victoria and Regional Development Victoria, and with other bodies such as Rural Councils Victoria, the Municipal Association of Victoria, RACV, VECCI and the Victorian Farmers Federation.

INFRASTRUCTURE VICTORIA DISCUSSION PAPER

RCV would firstly like to acknowledge the work undertaken so far by IV. The task of preparing a 30 year strategy for Victoria's entire infrastructure requirements is obviously immense. We congratulate IV for the



consultative and transparent approach that you have taken so far and thank you for meeting with our group earlier this year.

RCV also notes the increased focus that has been placed on regional cities in your report and thanks IV for recognising RCV's feedback, provided after the 'Laying the Foundations' report, published in February.

While RCV members will respond individually to the report, I have provided some general commentary on issues of commonality below. These relate to needs 9, 12 and the area of the report which addresses funding and financing.

NEED 9: Provide access to high-quality education infrastructure to support lifelong learning

Victoria's regional cities have some of the finest tertiary education facilities in regional Australia. However, not all cities have universities located within the city or close enough to commute routinely. Additionally, there is a worrying trend of tertiary institutions centralising facilities in major centres.

RCV recommends that IV further consider the benefit of encouraging greater cooperation between universities and state and local governments with a view to exploring the development of distance tertiary education hubs in cities which have limited courses available.

Ensuring access for potential students to a wider variety of study, without forcing them to commute or move, will assist in keeping young people in our cities and driving and modernising local economies.

NEED 12: Improve access to jobs and services for people in regional and rural areas

Regionalising Victoria's population growth is of benefit to both Melbourne and our regions and it is vital that there is sufficient availability of jobs and services in regional cities. Indeed, the Regional Australia Institute estimates that for every 100,000 Australians who choose to live in small cities, rather than the 5 major Australian capitals, an additional \$50 billion will be released into the economy over 30 years in reduced congestion costs and increased consumption.

RCV notes the focus that your discussion paper has placed on transport, infrastructure and the potential benefits of greater communications technology for Victoria's regional cities.

RCV encourages IV to reflect these considerations, and the opportunities presented by regionalising growth, in its final report.

FUNDING AND FINANCING

When compared to their metropolitan counterparts, regional council's budgets grow at slower rate and are subject to a greater dependence on federal funding grants, which have been frozen in recent years. These issues are likely to be exacerbated by the introduction of Victoria's rate cap. As a result of these constraints, planning for infrastructure projects in regional areas can sometimes take a back seat to the provision of everyday services and facilities.

As part of IV's strategy, RCV asks that you consider the merits of State Government assistance for the facilitation of regional infrastructure planning. Such a scheme would make funds available to assist with business planning and research related to the establishment of infrastructure business cases.



The benefits of this scheme would be twofold:

- i) Regional councils would be able to assess serious proposals outside of their economic development and planning departments; and
- ii) State and Federal Governments, as well as potential private developers, would have carefully considered and costed proposals available to assess.

Thank you for considering our submission and for your ongoing work on these important issues.

RCV would like to invite you to update us on IV's progress at our August 19 meeting. Our Secretariat will be in touch shortly, however if you require any information in the meantime, please feel free to contact me on **(03) 9654 4799**, or via email at rcv@cprcomm.com.au.

Yours sincerely,

Cr Rod Fyffe
Chair
Regional Cities Victoria