PIA Call to Action
Key Strategic Planning Issues in Victoria

2010 - 2011
Planning Institute Australia
Victorian Division
About PIA

The Planning Institute Australia (PIA) was founded in 1951 and currently serves over 5,000 members across Australia and approximately 950 in Victoria. It is the only national organisation representing professional urban, regional, social, environmental, transport, economic planners and urban designers.

PIA’s vision is to support the Australian planning profession and community in the creation of liveable communities, vibrant economies, sustainable places, diverse cultural expression and social cohesion.

The Planning Institute aims to serve the public interest of urban and regional communities through its activities through:

• Promotion of the professional interests of its members
• Establishment and administration of standards of professional competency
• Provision of training to increase its member’s knowledge base
• Facilitation of a forum to exchange views on planning issues
• Advancement of planning issues to the community, governments, private sector and academia.

As a professional institute, PIA differentiates itself from industry lobby groups and other organisations through rigorous academic and industry experience membership requirements.

Preamble to the PIA ‘Call to Action’

In the lead up to the 27 November 2010 State Election the PIA Victorian Committee were determined to identify and advocate key strategic planning issues to the various relevant political parties and community. This initiative was inspired by a similar activity referred to as the ‘Millennium Paper’ undertaken by the Division’s Committee in 1999. The 2010 version has been titled the “PIA Call to Action”.

The Victorian Division refined a number of potential topics down to 6 issues, each issue with nominated ‘actions’ to address the Institute’s concerns along with an ‘implementation strategy’ which explains how the solutions to the issues can be addressed.

All the political parties have been asked to comment on the Call to Action before it is distributed to the media, with the intention being to engage the broader community in discussions concerning the 6 issues.

In developing the Call to Action, the PIA Committee has noted the member’s comments through a variety of communication and consultation channels, including recent seminars and workshops, member surveys and articles in Planning News.

The 6 issues and associated actions are briefly outlined in this document.
1. Spring Clean the Planning System

The Planning and Environment Act (1987) is outdated in a number of ways:
- It lacks relevance to current planning policies such as ‘Melbourne@5 Million’.
- It creates a complex and ineffective process of development contributions and does not adequately address a number of issues including health, wellbeing or liveability.
- It provides for a planning approval process which is not best practice, does not enable the removal of political interference and does not provide for transparent, consistent, expedient outcomes.

**Action and Implementation Strategy**

a. Undertake a comprehensive, independent review of the Planning and Environment Act (1987). Appropriate bodies to review the Act include the State Services Authority, Victorian Competition & Efficiency Commission, or an independent expert panel.

b. Establish a ‘governor in council’ appointed position of Victorian State Planner, who would be delegated the Planning Minister’s ‘call in powers’, and would oversee, direct and report on implementation of planning policy throughout Victoria, in a similar fashion to other statutory officers such as Auditor General, or Ombudsman.

c. Introduce expert decision making panels across the State (Development Assessment Committees) with members who have planning expertise and are independent from political influence for all significant developments.

d. Introduce ‘code assessment’ and delegation of decision making to suitably qualified and experienced council officers.

e. Review all state and local planning policies every 4 years, applying the principle ‘if 1 word is added, 2 should be removed’.

f. Wholesale review of the Victorian Planning Provisions format planning schemes to remove provisions that do not add value, are duplicated by other controls and/or are unnecessary for inclusion in planning scheme.

2. Where and How We Live

Victoria is undergoing unprecedented population growth which is expected to continue as a result of increasing birth rates and immigration. Planning is an essential element in accommodating this growth and to ensure the availability of affordable housing, employment, appropriate infrastructure and the creation of liveable communities. The expansion of Melbourne’s fringe needs to be minimised and attention directed to existing urban areas.

**Action and Implementation Strategy**

a. Determine Urban Growth Boundaries for Melbourne and Victoria’s regional cities that will provide adequate future land supply, serviced by appropriate infrastructure and local employment.

b. Introduce higher density zoning to facilitate more compact cities and direct growth.

c. Protect farming areas to ensure the availability of fresh and affordable food.

d. Use developer contributions to ensure key infrastructure, particularly public transport, is available from the establishment of growth areas to enable healthy and sustainable communities to develop.

e. Increase the diversity and affordability of housing (including social housing) by introducing inclusionary zoning, transferable development rights and tax incentives.

f. Strategic land use plans need to be developed for Melbourne’s peri-urban areas.
3. Integrated Transport and Land Use Plan

PIA supports the genuine integration of land use and transport planning. The Institute believes that transport and land development are not separate issues, but are two facets of the same challenge. Integrated decision making needs to permeate land use and transport legislation, regulation and policy.

**Action and Implementation Strategy**

a. Land and transport planning to be integrated through the amalgamation of the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Department of Transport.
b. The Victorian State Planner (see issue 1b.) should oversee, direct and report to Parliament on the Integration of land use and transport planning.
c. The reviewed Planning and Environment Act should include the integration of transport and land use planning.

4. Sustainable Development

PIA is committed to the creation of sustainable communities, and will continue to work with industry and government to ensure that the design of all new development, including the retrofitting of existing communities, facilitates reductions in energy and water demand, whilst promoting the use of sustainable and renewable services.

**Action and Implementation Strategy**

a. Clause 56 water recycling requirements to be expanded to cover all development.
b. State and local planning policies to foster sustainable development.
c. State policy and planning controls to be amended to facilitate renewable and sustainable energy generation, recycling and re-use of water.
5. A Better Built Environment

PIA believes strongly in the role that good quality urban design plays in creating places that are liveable, functional, attractive and sustainable. The Institute actively promotes and advocates the values of good urban design, and continues to foster, promote and acknowledge high quality and innovative urban environments.

**Action and Implementation Strategy**

a. The 12 Principles of the Victorian Urban Design Charter and should be included in the State Planning Policy Framework of planning schemes.
b. All state and local government building and infrastructure projects should meet the 12 principles of the Urban Design Charter.
c. A body similar to the independent UK Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) is established in Australia.

6. Participation in Planning

The Institute is committed to increasing the community’s awareness, dialogue, activism and ownership of planning issues. Community engagement can work to create cultural change rather than relying on ‘engineering solutions’ to solve social justice and safety issues.

**Action and Implementation Strategy**

a. Planning decisions need to be ‘depoliticised’ and made in a bipartisan manner, which can be achieved by the introduction of the Victorian State Planner (see issue 1b.)
b. Government at all levels needs to employ consistent, best practice processes of community engagement and consultation to allow meaningful community input in decision making.