Participant briefing pack

Water Special Focus Workshop
The City of Port Phillip is embarking on a community engagement program to develop a new Council Plan 2017-2027 for our City.

Together we are facing a future of exciting possibilities – as well as new challenges. A future with more residents, higher density housing developments, impacts from a changing climate, and new ways of working and living in a modern world.

We have a choice – to embrace and manage change to make our City an even better place for people or let change happen to us.

The stakes are high, and what we’ve done in the past may not work in the future. That’s why we are asking the community to join us in a serious conversation about the possible futures for our City.

This briefing pack is divided into three sections as follows:

• Section 1: City of Port Phillip’s key challenges
• Section 2: Background on the workshop topic area – Water
• Section 3: Frequently Asked Questions
Section 1:
City of Port Phillip’s key challenges
Population growth

By 2036, Port Phillip is expected to grow to more than 142,200 people, a significant 33 per cent increase from the 2015 Estimated Resident Population of 107,127 people. By 2050, projections show a doubling of the Port Phillip population.

Our worker population will also rise dramatically. The Fishermans Bend renewal area is expected to cater for 60,000 jobs by 2050, with just over half of these jobs projected within the City of Port Phillip.

Growth will not be uniform across the City. The St Kilda Road and Fishermans Bend neighbourhoods are projected to grow significantly, while other established neighbourhoods will have low or no growth.

In 2036, the population will continue to be highly mobile and dominated by 25-39 year olds, but with an increasing proportion of older people. More than two-thirds of our households will be single person and couples without children.

Population growth will increase demand for all Council services and amenities. The cost of providing services will increase and demand will stretch services and infrastructure.

Urbanisation

Population growth will drive an increase in urban density. Around 25,000 new dwellings will be required by 2036 to accommodate the expected population growth in Port Phillip.

The Fishermans Bend renewal area will make a significant contribution to housing growth, with new high density neighbourhoods. The density of established areas across the City will also increase, with the St Kilda / St Kilda West and St Kilda Road neighbourhoods accounting for more than half of the projected housing growth outside Fishermans Bend over the next 20 years.

We will see more medium to high density residential development / vertical living and continued pressure to convert commercial areas to residential use.

With increasing density and vertical living, more people will use our parks, villages, roads and footpaths, beaches and public transport. There may be more tension, as public spaces will have to cater for different uses.

Housing costs in Port Phillip are twice the Melbourne average. Private rental and home purchase in Port Phillip is now unaffordable for both lower and moderate income households.

Climate change

Australia’s weather is becoming hotter, drier and more extreme. Melbourne is predicted to experience a 0.6°C increase in average temperatures by 2030. There will be a corresponding two per cent decrease in rainfall, a 10-15 per cent increase in storm intensity, and projected sea level rise of between 10-20 centimetres.

Port Phillip is already experiencing the impacts of climate change, including temperature increases (of between 1.2 and 1.4 degrees since 1950), lower than average rainfall (a decrease of between 100 and 200 millimetres since 1950), more flooding, and a notable increase in the number of days over 35 degrees.

Our City’s beach lifestyle and coastal activities are very attractive and important to residents and visitors. However, Port Phillip is built on reclaimed land to the south and north. Much of the City is only one to three metres above sea level and coastal areas are exposed to the impacts of climate change, especially flooding and erosion.

We can expect increased flooding of coastal properties and public amenities, storm damage to infrastructure, beach erosion, decreased water quality and security of water supply, reduced summer outdoor activities and hotter urban spaces. Council assets and the Port Phillip community have varying abilities to cope with these changes.
Key challenges

Legislative and policy influence
All Victorian councils operate in a complex legislative and policy environment that includes 75 Acts of Parliament and 28 Regulations. The key Act (the Local Government Act 1989) is under review.

A trend of government cost shifting and increased compliance will likely continue. Government funding is being reduced or withdrawn from several sectors, placing additional expectation on local government to fill the gap.

The introduction of a cap on rate increases means local government’s ability to control revenue is constrained. Accordingly, we are experiencing increased strain on our financial sustainability.

The Victorian Government’s cap on local government rate increases is forecast to impact Council’s bottom line by $67 million over the next 10 years if we don’t make changes to the way we operate and deliver our services.

Changing economic conditions
Port Phillip’s economy was close to $12 billion in 2014, contributing 4.3 per cent of the greater Melbourne economy. Significant employment areas in Port Phillip include the St Kilda Road office precinct and established business clusters in South Melbourne and Port Melbourne.

The Port Phillip section of Fishermans Bend is currently home to over 750 businesses and approximately 12,000 workers. The transition of Fishermans Bend to a mixed use community will have a significant impact on the number and type of businesses and jobs in that area.

Our people can expect to spend more time travelling to work outside of the City. We may also continue to experience a change in the nature of our business community as high rental prices put pressure on smaller businesses. We may experience a decrease in creativity and vibrancy if our existing artists and creative businesses relocate outside of Port Phillip.

The spectrum of people considered vulnerable is widening due to increased costs of living, rental and property costs, social exclusion and health inequity. More than 8,000 residents are living in housing stress and 2,500 residents are on the public housing waiting list (excluding local community housing waiting lists).

Rapid evolution of new technology
The world is becoming more connected. People, businesses and governments are increasingly moving online to connect, to deliver and access services, to obtain information and to perform transactions like shopping and working.

We can expect increasing demand for online services, and engagement through social media and other digital means. Technology is also changing the way our residents work. Around one in every 12 workers works from home.

The digital shift will reshape how we deliver services. Technological advances present opportunities for Council to consider new methods of service delivery that have the potential to offer efficiencies, for example electronic parking management.
Key challenges

Transport and parking

Road network congestion will continue to be an issue as our population grows and the capacity of our road network for cars cannot be increased. There are ongoing efforts by the Victorian Government to prioritise more efficient and sustainable travel modes such as trams, walking and cycling.

Port Phillip currently experiences very significant traffic volumes caused by local workers and residents, as well as people travelling through our municipality on arterial roads. As our City grows, managing congestion will be reliant on more people choosing to travel by non-car modes.

There is an increasing challenge in the allocation of on-street car parking spaces to different users such as residents, workers and visitors. In many parts of the municipality, demand for parking outstrips supply, and Council needs to make decisions about how to best allocate this scarce resource.
Section 2: Background on the workshop topic
Water
As our climate changes, water will increasingly become a scarce resource and we may get more storm events. Reducing our potable (drinking quality) water use is desirable and may, in the future, become a necessity.

Consistent and reliable rainfall is currently insufficient to maintain many of our parks, gardens and playing surfaces, with some spaces requiring supplementary irrigation to keep them green, safe and usable. Green spaces are important as they make people healthier and happier.

Options to harvest or reuse water may be expensive and require modifications to both private and public infrastructure. Alone, these measures may not be enough to address any water shortages so we need to think about what our priorities are if we need to make choices about our water use.

The question you’ll be answering along with other participants at this workshop

How do we reduce usage of potable (drinking quality) water (in line with Council targets and in response to climate change) while meeting community expectations for level of amenity (that is, green spaces, sports fields, passive recreation and health of street trees)?
Background to these questions

For more than 10 years Council has been committed to reducing water use. In 2007 Council adopted a Toward Zero Environment Strategy which set ambitious targets committing Council to minimising potable (drinking quality) water use 70 per cent by 2020 based on 2000 levels.

In 2010 Council endorsed an organisation-wide ‘Water Plan – Toward a Water Sensitive City’ which set out five strategies for integrated water management. The Water Plan has underpinned Council’s approach to using water efficiently and accessing water through stormwater harvesting and reuse.

As part of the plan, Council prepared a water balance to understand inflows and outflows and determined that a significant proportion of its water use could be met through alternative water sources including stormwater and rain falling directly on its catchment.

Approximately 70-80 per cent of Council’s water use occurs through irrigation activities, which is subject to seasonal variability. This is shown in the graph as ‘Parks and Open Space’ and ‘Sport and Recreation’.

Port Phillip is experiencing significant growth and the City’s population is expected to double by 2050. Land prices make the purchase of additional open space challenging and we are expecting increased demand on sports fields, parks and foreshore spaces through increased visitation, events, sporting and passive use. As housing in the City densifies, with more apartment style living, public space will increasingly become people’s backyards.

Community expectations around the quality, management, safety and sustainability of public spaces all year round is resulting in increased demands for irrigation.

According to the recently published Victorian Government Water Plan (Water for Victoria), under a high population growth assumption, supply and demand for potable water will intersect within the next 15-20 years as shown in the graph below.
Council met and exceeded its 2020 target (70 per cent reduction in potable water use) in 2007 during the millennium drought. However this had a negative impact on the health of our open spaces and trees. Water use has increased in subsequent years as shown in the following graph.

Recent investigations suggest that 244 ML (million litres) of water is needed each year to deliver optimal irrigation to all priority open space in the City. To meet our target of a 70 per cent water reduction on 2000 levels, this means we should only access 108ML of mains water. The remaining 136ML per year would ideally need to be accessed in alternative ways. Stormwater harvesting projects may provide an opportunity in the coming years to reduce potable water use while also providing new water for irrigation.

Who will be providing information at this Special Focus Workshop?

Renae Walton, Acting Coordinator Sustainable Policy, City of Port Phillip
Renae will outline the City of Port Phillip’s Toward Zero water savings targets and the challenges of meeting these. She will also outline rainfall patterns and what might happen in a changing climate when water may not fall as regularly or when it does it will be in larger amounts.

Jamie Ewert, Regional Executive Director (Southern), Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities
Jamie will outline integrated water management, as a concept and in practice, outlining innovative options from around the world including stormwater harvesting as well as the costs, benefits, key challenges and opportunities into the future.

Yvonne Lynch, Team Leader Urban Forest & Urban Ecology, City of Melbourne
Yvonne will outline the importance of our green urban spaces and trees to the wellbeing of people in a city and how City of Melbourne is responding to climate adaptation.
What is Council already doing to attempt to respond to these questions and issues?

Since the Toward Zero and Water Plans were adopted Council has been identifying opportunities to decrease its water use, increase irrigation efficiency and use stormwater more effectively as a water source.

Water sensitive urban design
Council embraces water sensitive urban design (WSUD) – a range of measures designed to avoid, or at least minimise, the environmental impacts of urbanisation in terms of the demand for water and the potential pollution threat to natural water bodies. WSUD can include:

- Rainwater tanks, which do provide water and can reduce flooding frequency
- Raingardens, wetlands and swales to slow down rain water and improve water quality being discharged to Port Phillip Bay.
- Stormwater harvesting, which can reduce the need for mains water use and be used for irrigation.

Stormwater harvesting
In 2013, Council completed the Elsternwick Park Stormwater Harvesting Scheme, a collaboration with Bayside City Council and supported by additional funds from the Commonwealth Government. This was designed to deliver up to 20-30 ML of water to Council for the irrigation of sporting fields and passive recreation spaces in Elwood Reserve. This is dependent on several factors including annual rainfall, and we anticipate collecting 10ML this year.

Drought tolerant sporting fields and open space
Council has an Open Space Water Management Plan adopted in 2010. In line with this plan, Council is, where possible, replacing existing turf grass in parks and open spaces with warm season turf grass varieties that are better suited to drier, high use conditions.

Water Sensitive Gardens
Council is planting drought tolerant, low maintenance plants that suit the particular character of the area they are being planted in. For example, the vegetation planted at St Vincent’s Garden is quite different to that planted on the foreshore in Elwood. Our planting programs ensure dying and diseased plants are replaced, canopy cover is gradually increased and there is optimal irrigation that doesn’t compromise water use targets.
What are others (organisations/community members) already doing regarding these questions and issues?

- Throughout the wider Melbourne region, local governments are working together and with Melbourne Water on reducing potable water use and stormwater harvesting projects.
- The Victorian Government is working with local councils to identify local water cycle planning priorities. The resulting regional water cycle plans will drive investment by the State and key stakeholders including local governments. The plans will be developed in conjunction with neighbouring councils.

What ideas, suggestions or proposals are being considered, or have been considered?

- Artificial grass on sport fields could be considered for certain areas in Fishermans Bend. Although this option might allow for green playing surfaces all year round, with reduced water consumption and maintenance, it may be offset by increased urban heat island impacts, reduced amenity due to the artificial look and feel of the playing surface and micro-plastics might enter the stormwater system as the playing surface deteriorates.
- Artificial grass also requires periodic cleaning (water-use) as bacteria and pathogens are not removed or broken down as in a natural lawn/soil environment. Soil health can deteriorate below the artificial turf due to reduced oxygenation.
- Planning and investigations have been undertaken to identify opportunities for stormwater harvesting across the City. Stormwater harvesting schemes in Alma Park and Albert Park Lake are currently under detailed investigation. The development of businesses cases will determine if these schemes are feasible ways of sourcing alternative water supplies for irrigation.
- Recycled water is currently being planned for the Fishermans Bend area. This initiative is being led by South East Water and would provide an opportunity to access an alternative supply for open space in the area including high use sites such as JL Murphy Reserve.

What would be outside of Council’s control, or beyond its responsibilities, or expertise?

- Rainfall patterns and climate conditions
- State Government induced water restrictions
- Large scale water recycling infrastructure in Fisherman Bend, which is being led by South East Water
What could other organisations/layers of government do in response to these questions and issues?

- Provide technical expertise on innovative water harvesting opportunities. An example is large scale under road water harvesting pits that capture and treat water off roadways and rooftops for reuse in irrigation.
- Expand the recycled water network proposed for Fishermans Bend. This is the installation of a third ‘purple’ pipe that brings recycled water back into people’s homes and business for toilet flushing, irrigation, laundry and hot water systems.
- Leverage large scale State infrastructure projects to provide legacy projects that support water harvesting and reuse.

What could everyday citizens do in response to these questions and issues?

- Support advocacy efforts of Council for large scale stormwater harvesting initiatives and Fishermans Bend water recycling.
- Install, where possible, personal or shared rain tanks to help keep private gardens, lawns and street trees healthy.
- Be conscious of personal water consumption so that the combined Council and community potable water use reduces over time.
- Accept variations in the quality of public open space surfaces in drier periods.
Section 3:
Frequently Asked Questions
Why is Council asking the community to help develop this plan?

As outlined in this document, the City of Port Phillip is facing a number of important challenges. Council believes that better solutions can be developed by involving the community, rather than merely consulting the community about our possible solutions.

Our City’s residents, businesses and groups have a wealth of knowledge that we know we need to tap into. By involving the community, we can gain a better understanding of what’s important to people, how we can do better, and how the community can contribute to solutions.

Involving the community will improve the quality of the Council Plan 2017-2027 and provide greater understanding and transparency around how Council will respond to the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Why is Council organising Special Focus Workshops?

Council has identified four key challenges it wants to explore with a cross section of the Port Phillip community. We have arranged several experts/guest speakers to provide different perspectives on these challenges, and are inviting participants to consider how best the Council and community can respond to them. The conclusions arrived at will be published, and Council will publicly respond to the advice provided in regard to these challenges.

The following key topics are being discussed:
- Water
- Diversity and inclusion
- Waste management
- Transport and parking

The topics were selected as they are issues considered important and urgent enough to address, or begin responding to, during this four year term of Council. They are complex and multi-faceted, and require a deeper conversation in order for the community to provide useful advice.

We are hosting online discussion forums on the same key topics for anyone who is unable to attend the workshops. All ideas gathered from the community will be considered as part of the development of the plan.

What will happen to the advice we provide in the workshop or online forums?

All ideas gathered at the workshops and online forums will be considered as part of Council Plan. Some of those ideas will be great, some will be easily implementable, others may not be feasible or possible to include.

There is a Findings Forum on 23 February 2017 which workshop participants will be encouraged to attend. Participants will be asked to collectively review the outputs from each of the workshops and online forums to help determine what they feel are the top priorities. The combined outputs from the Findings Forum will be provided to Council to consider as part of their development of the Council Plan 2017-2027.

What happens after the workshops?

- March 2017: Council develops draft Council Plan 2017-2027 for feedback
- April - May 2017: Draft Council Plan 2017-2027 circulated to the public for feedback
- June 2017: Council Plan 2017-2027 finalised and adopted
- July 2017: New Council Plan 2017-2027 starts