VICTORIA'S 30-YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY
December 2016
Recommendations summary

Infrastructure, at its core, is about connectivity. The transport system enables people and goods to get to and from places. Communication networks collapse the distances between places. Education infrastructure enables the transfer of knowledge between people. Health infrastructure allows people to access the expertise of others. Shared community spaces, like libraries and parks, enable people to commune with each other and with nature. Essential services, like water and electricity, connect homes and businesses through grids that are often hidden from view.

Infrastructure, and the connections it enables, is critical to the functioning and success of Victoria’s society, economy and environment. The recommendations set out in this section aim to improve how the State of Victoria provides, uses and maintains infrastructure to get better outcomes for the people of Victoria. Government already does a lot of things well. The recommendations focus on what it can do differently.
Key messages

Looking across the recommendations, the key messages being conveyed are as follows:

- **Changing the way existing infrastructure is operated can have a much greater impact than building new things.** For example, the introduction of a pricing scheme to influence how the transport system is used and the widespread use of driveless cars could dwarf the impact of building any new major road or rail line.

- **Land use planning decisions should factor in the capacity of existing infrastructure.** For example, greater densification of housing in established areas that are already well serviced with infrastructure is more efficient than providing new infrastructure in new areas.

- **Often, the amount of money typically spent on infrastructure does not need to increase, it just needs to be spent more wisely.** For example, it’s unlikely government will stop building and upgrading schools over the next 30 years, but there is an opportunity to introduce more transparency and certainty into the prioritisation process by which investments are made.

- **Sometimes more investment in infrastructure is required.** For example, there is a strong case for substantially increasing the amount of money spent on social housing, given the scale of the unmet need and the potential social and economic benefits from making such an investment.

- **There is no point providing new infrastructure if asset management and maintenance are not done properly.** For example, providing extra support to refurbish or rationalise community facilities that are poorly maintained or no longer fit-for-purpose will have a much greater impact overall than cutting ribbons on new buildings.

- **Technology has the potential to transform the way infrastructure is used.** For example, advances in digital health care will continue to have a transformative effect on the settings for service delivery and the patient experience (assuming enabling communications infrastructure is in place, as discussed below).

Our top three

All of the recommendations outlined in this strategy have been identified as priorities by infrastructure Victoria. But if we had to nominate the top three most important actions for government to take in the short to medium term, we would choose:

1. Increasing densities in established areas and around employment centres to make better use of existing infrastructure.

2. Introducing a comprehensive and fair transport network pricing regime to manage demands on the network.

3. Investing in social housing and other forms of affordable housing for vulnerable Victorians to significantly increase supply.

The common link

Another important area for action is improving internet and mobile phone coverage, particularly in regional and rural areas.

The recommendation on communications network infrastructure isn’t a simple fix and doesn’t have a guaranteed outcome. But it does encourage state government to take a more proactive, coordinated approach to addressing this pressing infrastructure challenge.

Digital connectivity will be critical to Victoria’s success over the coming decades. It will enable the uptake of technological developments in a range of sectors and industries. It is the common link running through this strategy.

We think these recommendations on densification, transport pricing, housing for vulnerable Victorians and communications infrastructure have the potential to transform the economic and social fabric of the state over the coming decades, making Victoria a fairer, more productive and more sustainable place to live, work and do business.

None of these actions will be simple to implement. All will require further research and planning and state government will need to partner with the Commonwealth Government, local governments, private enterprises and community sector organisations to achieve the best outcomes for Victoria.

More information on these recommendations is available under Needs 1, 7, 10 and 12.