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Water Planning Project Team
Water and Catchments Group
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Level 10, 8 Nicholson St
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Ask for: Kathleen McClusky
Phone: 9932 1000
Our Ref: A2357308

To Whom It May Concern

Water for Victoria Discussion Paper

Hobsons Bay City Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Water for Victoria Discussion Paper. Council has a strong commitment to water management, which is demonstrated through our Integrated Water Management Plan 2014 and is identified as a key priority area in our Advocacy Strategy.

The overall direction of the discussion paper is supported in principle. In particular the decision to recognise climate change as a significant risk to water planning, the importance of waterway and catchment health, the strong focus on resilient and liveable cities and towns, and Aboriginal values.

However we believe further consultation is required to clarify roles and responsibilities, resourcing and funding of the proposed strategic directions outlined in the discussion paper, which we understand Melbourne Water is commencing work in this area. While greater collaboration on water management is supported it is important that any such collaboration be entered into recognising that councils must continue to manage local issues in accordance with local needs and within local resources. A detailed response to the discussion paper is attached.

We welcome any additional opportunities for feedback on either this Discussion Paper or Draft Water for Victoria strategy that may be developed. Should you wish to discuss the submission further please contact Kathleen McClusky, Manager Strategy and Advocacy on 9932 1004 or email kmclusky@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Chris Eddy
Chief Executive Officer



Hobsons Bay City Council Submission to Water for Victoria Discussion Paper

General comments

The overall direction outlined in the discussion paper is supported in principle. However, it is recommended that specific consultation with local government is required to clearly articulate roles, responsibilities and resources.

The discussion paper would also benefit from a stronger narrative that provides clearer associations between key sections of the document.

There is some reference to capacity building in the discussion paper. It is recommended that this be strengthened by including key stakeholder sectors in addition to water authorities and local government. Land use planners and developers, contractors, business and the community all influence water use through their daily actions and would benefit from further capacity building.

Within the Introduction, and throughout the discussion paper, reference is made to most of Victoria's water resources already being used at their sustainable limits. There is also reference to changing rainfall patterns, stream and groundwater conditions due to climate change. It is recommended that the final strategy provide for a strategic direction that recognises the need for a periodic review of the sustainable limits for water use within the context of climate change.

Chapter 2 – Climate change

The decision to recognise climate change and its significant impact on water security, flooding and rainfall patterns is supported.

The direction to reduce the greenhouse footprint of the water sector is also supported. It is important to reiterate that reducing greenhouse gas emissions across all community and government sectors is critical. This will reduce the threats to our water sector and therefore reduce the costs and difficulties of adaptation interventions. Water authorities can show leadership and potentially assist the community to reduce emissions.

It is recommended that the proposed strategic direction should be strengthened to include building the capacity of both the water sector and, where appropriate, key government and industry groups (such as local government, land use planners and developers) to understand and deliver solutions to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and manage the impacts of climate change on flooding, water security and coastal biodiversity protection.



It is also recommended that clearer connections should be made between the threat of climate change and other sections of the discussion paper. For example:

- the proposed strategic direction to update integrated water management standards in planning schemes (p74)
- the discussion paper recognises that climate change will result in, "seasonal shifts and decreases in rainfall" (p25) but has not made clear links between this and the health of waterways, changes in stream flows and ecology or the need to review water entitlements over time to ensure they continue to be sustainable
- the discussion paper recognises that there will be, "increased intensity of heavy rainfall events" (p25) that will need to be considered during water planning and infrastructure design, but has stopped short of considering the implications on land use planning
- the discussion paper recognises the need to work with communities, research organisations, business and industry to build our understanding of climate change (p25) but leaves out key stakeholders such as local government

Chapter 3 – Waterway and catchment health

The Hobsons Bay community has consistently informed Council that the health of their local waterways are important to them. Therefore, the decision to have a strong focus on waterway health as part of the discussion paper is supported.

It is recognised that improving and restoring the health of complex natural environments such as waterways can take many years. Therefore, the decision to develop and implement long term plans for the protection and restoration of many of the states waterways is supported.

It is recommended that there is a greater recognition of the difference between the urban and non-urban context for waterway management. Conversely, that the narrative is improved in describing the connection between the urban context for waterway management and Chapter five 'Resilient and liveable cities and towns'.

In principle, stronger links between the catchment management framework and the planning system to provide greater protection to waterway values is supported. However, it is recommended that strong consultation and collaboration with local government is undertaken to develop these links.

Strategic direction 3.3 discusses the need to provide clear objectives for setbacks and the protection of riparian vegetation in the State Planning Policy Framework to protect the Yarra River corridor. While the protection of the Yarra River corridor is supported



there are many other waterways that would benefit from increased protection and these should be considered as part of the discussion paper.

Chapter 5 – Resilient and liveable cities

The objective of Chapter five to build resilience and liveability through effective water planning and management is supported.

The aim of having flood resilient communities, properties and infrastructure is also supported. It is therefore recommended that improved sea level rise and storm surge modelling to inform decision making be strongly supported by the Victorian Government. It is also recommended that improved state wide flood modelling be undertaken that clearly identifies the flood risk to downstream communities from new urban growth areas and changes in rainfall intensities. This information is crucial for informing robust land use planning decisions and any amendments to the planning schemes identifying flood prone areas be undertaken by the State Government to streamline the process and reduce the burden on local governments.

An Integrated Water Management (IWM) approach and the use of, “fit-for-purpose approaches that are tailored to local conditions with community input” is supported. It is noted that while it supports IWM, the feedback previously provided (see attached letter to Ms Cathy Wilkinson dated 7 October 2014) remains relevant. Key points include that:

- Councils are democratically elected representative bodies and must be free to manage local issues in accordance with local needs and local resources. This is particularly relevant in light of rate capping. Rate capping will significantly strain Councils capacity to invest in non-critical services
- the development of sub-regional and local IWM plans should be a collaborative process, incorporating feedback and locally relevant knowledge from all key stakeholder groups
- capacity building, technical and financial resources will be need to effectively implement IWM plans on both a local a regional scale.

The Victorian Government currently has mechanisms to finance works in the water sector. It is recommended that a review of these mechanisms be undertaken to determine how they can be effectively utilised to deliver key elements of any future Water for Victoria Strategy, in particular regarding resilient and liveable cities and waterway health.



As recognised in the discussion paper, the community has a critical role in achieving water management outcomes. Successful behaviour change programs are needed to influence sustainable water management practices amongst the community, and build their understanding of what actions they can take to manage their water sustainably. Such programs should consider the long term social and environmental outcomes that need to be achieved. Messaging should be consistent over the long term.

Chapter 6 – Recognising and managing for aboriginal values

The decision to recognise the cultural value that water has for Aboriginal people and to build the capacity of water managers to work with Victoria's Traditional Owners is supported.

Chapter 7 – Recognising recreational values

Water in all its forms is important to the community and supports many recreational activities. As a coastal municipality, the decision to recognise the vast range of recreational values that our water has while protecting natural values and sustainable water use is supported.