



“We are about making a difference. This Authority is an important and exciting initiative by the State Government. I am confident we can improve the development approval process and help create better planned more liveable communities in the five important growth areas around Melbourne.”

Chris Banks AM (Chairman)

Mike Scrafton, Frank King, Carol Schwartz, Felix Blatt, Minister Hulls, Rob Spence, Chris Banks

## GAA Set to Help, Not Hinder

Making planning across Melbourne's growth areas easier, not harder is the driving force behind the new Growth Areas Authority according to its first Chairman, Chris Banks.

"I'm aware of the cautious optimism in the industry about the GAA's impact on the development process," Mr Banks said.

"But I'm determined to show we will help, not hinder development and greatly improve the quality of urban communities in Melbourne's five growth areas."

Mr Banks said while the GAA may appear to some to be another level of bureaucracy, its goal was to bring together the major players in Melbourne's planning system to enable things to happen quicker than they would otherwise.

"Things will happen a lot earlier now, or happen where they wouldn't have happened at all. That's what you get from good partnerships," he said. "I've learnt in the private sector that industry can't do it on its own. Or if you do, you get poor results."

Mr Banks said there were three key dimensions to the GAA's role: context, coordination and community.

**Context:** developing Precinct Structure Plans and using the Victorian

Government's new Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines to avoid planning in a vacuum. It also involves administering the Initial State Development Contributions Plan to incorporate planning of infrastructure and to seek a fair contribution from developers towards the cost of community infrastructure.

**Coordination:** communicating, consulting and resolving issues during the Precinct Structure Planning phase, and coordinating government agencies.

**Community:** providing a platform and fabric to encourage community growth and a sense of belonging in Melbourne's five growth areas of Casey-Cardinia, Hume, Melton-Caroline Springs, Wyndham and Whittlesea. Mr Banks recognises constructive partnerships between the public and private sectors are essential to create liveable, sustainable communities. But he confirmed the GAA was not in the business of usurping the role of local Councils or other government agencies.

"Local government is still the frontline operator, we're not replacing them. The Department of Infrastructure is still responsible for public transport, while VicRoads and the Department of Education and Training are always going to plan roads and schools," Mr Banks said.

"Our role is to connect them better to get speedier outcomes. If we can achieve that, it will be of great benefit to the community."

“My ambition for the GAA is to create an organisation that is respected in the development sector and by Government and has the capacity to identify impediments to good planning and find speedy solutions around them. The GAA needs to be seen as a 'value add' organisation whilst respecting the role of Councils and Government agencies.”

Frank King

## CEO's Message

The establishment of the Growth Areas Authority is a key step in producing sustainable and liveable new communities as Melbourne grows and it has been a great privilege to have been associated with its birth.

Planning for the future of the growth areas is not a new activity. Local government has been active and effective in this area for a long time and has achieved many fine results. As we look forward, it is clear that State government will need to partner more effectively with municipal councils in the growth areas to address the challenges of coordinated provision of public transport, housing diversity and affordability, employment opportunities, environmental sustainability and the delivery of community services.

Moreover, there are also many examples of the development industry getting well ahead of local and State governments and finding innovative but still commercial solutions to many of the planning and service delivery challenges facing the creation of new communities. There is much to be learned from their experience and the GAA will work to bring together all the players into partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

My debt to the numerous people who worked very hard to bring the Growth Areas Authority into being is large. Equally I am grateful to all of my colleagues across government who contributed to the Precinct Structure Guidelines and the Initial State Development Contributions Plan.

We look forward to making a difference.



MIKE SCRAFTON

“The GAA presents an exciting opportunity to shape development in Victorian growth areas and to ensure that such development meets the community's needs to 2030 and beyond.”

Felix Blatt



Inaugural Board meeting in progress

## Inaugural meeting of the GAA Board

The GAA Board had its inaugural meeting on 20 September 2006. The Minister for Planning, Rob Hulls MP addressed the Board and stressed the importance of the independence of the Authority and its need to forge strong working partnerships with Councils, developers and Government agencies. Also in attendance was the Secretary of the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Prof Lyndsay Neilson.

## New Board Vows to Make a Difference

A highly experienced board has been announced to oversee the work of the new Growth Areas Authority (GAA).

Appointed by Victorian Minister for Planning Rob Hulls on September 1, the GAA Board is chaired by respected housing industry leader, Chris Banks, and includes members Felix Blatt, Frank King, Carol Schwartz and Rob Spence.

The board comprises high level expertise from a broad range of disciplines including planning, development, economics, financial management, local government and housing.

Established by the Victorian Government, the GAA guides planning and development in Melbourne's five growth areas of Casey-Cardinia, Hume, Melton-Caroline Springs, Wyndham and Whittlesea.

Mr Hulls said the aim of the GAA was to ensure new suburbs were planned in a way that enhanced quality of life for residents and was environmentally sustainable.

“The GAA will put an end to piecemeal development and isolated estates, and ensure that our new communities have a choice of housing, shopping, public transport, jobs and parks nearby,” Mr Hulls said.

“New communities should be well planned and linked to public transport so that people don't have to use a litre of petrol to buy a litre of milk.”

## Guidelines Released for Planning New Communities

The Victorian Government has released a set of clear guidelines to give local Councils, developers and the Growth Areas Authority more direction when planning and designing new communities.

Released on September 1, the Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines are intended to achieve well designed, sustainable neighbourhoods in Melbourne's five growth areas.

Chair of the Growth Areas Authority (GAA), Chris Banks, said the Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines would be used by the GAA and Victorian Government agencies to assess the suitability of Precinct Structure Plans.

“These guidelines will provide greater certainty, faster decisions and better coordination of all parties involved in the planning of Melbourne's growth areas,” Mr Banks said.

“By following these steps we should be able to make life in our new suburbs much more affordable, practical and people friendly.”

The guidelines are based on the objectives of Melbourne 2030, the Victorian Government's plan for the growth and development of metropolitan Melbourne.

They will be monitored during the next 12 months and amendments made following consultation with a range of stakeholders including local Councils and developers.

Precinct Structure Plans are an important part of Melbourne's planning hierarchy. They set objectives for housing yields, choice and affordability and outline the infrastructure required to support development.

Precinct Structure Plans are approved by the Minister for Planning on the advice of the GAA following acceptance by relevant local Councils. Once approved, they provide an agreed basis for all subsequent decisions on development within precincts.

“An agreed Precinct Structure Plan must be in place before land in growth areas is rezoned for urban development,” Mr Banks said.

Local Councils remain responsible for preparing planning scheme amendments and for subsequent, more detailed planning processes for individual development approval.

**To download a copy of the Draft Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines visit [www.gaa.vic.gov.au/Publications/](http://www.gaa.vic.gov.au/Publications/)**

“We have an opportunity with this body to make a difference to outer Melbourne, by ensuring urban design and community development takes place in a well co-ordinated and organised manner. We won't get an opportunity like this again.”

Rob Spence (Deputy Chair)

partners in creating new communities

## Putting People First in Melbourne's Growth Areas

The launch of a new planning authority for Melbourne's five growth areas is set to improve urban development standards and make new communities more focussed on what people need to live well.

Building better communities that are people friendly and meet everyday needs is a major focus of the Growth Areas Authority (GAA), according to its first chairman, Chris Banks.

Having spent more than 40 years with AV Jennings Homes and later at the helm of Delfin, Mr Banks said the time is right to take neighbourhood planning and development to a new level.

*“What we want are healthy urban communities where people have easy access to important services and facilities and they don't have to travel long distances to do their shopping, go to work or kick a football,” Mr Banks said.*

The GAA was established by the Victorian Government to build stronger relationships between local Councils, developers and government agencies and to oversee better planned communities in Melbourne's growth areas.

Melbourne is expanding dramatically, with an extra 450,000 people expected to live in the city's growth areas by 2030, requiring more than 220,000 new homes in Casey-Cardinia, Hume, Melton-Caroline Springs, Whittlesea and Wyndham.

The new CEO of the GAA, Mike Scafton, admits it's a huge task. “After solving this we'll move on to ending world hunger,” he laughs.

Growing up in Broadmeadows, where the town library was built 40 years after the housing went up, he knows just what it's like to live in a poorly planned suburb.

Mr Scafton spent 18 years with the Defence Department, where his last position was Head of Infrastructure. More recently he was the General Manager of Strategic Policy and Projects in the Department of Sustainability and Environment. Mr Scafton has grappled with complex infrastructure problems before.

*“There are a whole range of issues that we're trying to address here, but the main problem is people are moving in before the infrastructure is there to support them. That's not conducive to building strong, sustainable communities.”*

The GAA's two key roles are to plan new suburbs in a way that enhances the community, creates employment and is sustainable, and to



Chris Banks (Chairman) and Mike Scafton (CEO)

sequence that development so that government can provide infrastructure in a planned way.

Mr Scafton said this would be achieved by planning for entire suburbs – or precincts – rather than by subdivision, and by the strategic release of land to keep downward pressure on houses and land prices.

Although there are some who think the GAA will add another layer of bureaucracy to the planning process, Mr Scafton disagrees.

“It sounds counter-intuitive that by creating a new organisation we will simplify a complex planning process and add value, but that's exactly what we intend to do,” says Mr Scafton.

Another role of the GAA is to administer the Initial State Development Contributions Plan, a new mechanism for development contributions towards future State infrastructure and services in Melbourne's growth areas.

Mr Scafton said all projects funded by the contributions would be publicly listed so every dollar would be tracked.

In November 2005 the Victorian Government also changed the Urban Growth Boundary to free up more land for new housing, which increased land values overnight.

“In some cases, land values have increased by as much as \$300,000 to \$400,000 per hectare, so it's only fair the windfall gains are partly used to provide infrastructure and services,” Mr Scafton said.

*Mr Scafton said the good news for developers is that they no longer have to deal with as many agencies when finalising their plans and are also able to negotiate 'in kind' contributions.*

*“Victoria will continue to have the lowest infrastructure contribution arrangements of any major Australian city,” he said.*

GAA Chair, Chris Banks, said the authority intended to bring together as many major players as possible to get things happening faster. He cites the development of a shared

education campus at Caroline Springs in Melbourne's west as a good example of what can be achieved.

“This was a first, where the Shire of Melton, the Victorian Government and Delfin worked together to build a first class education campus, bringing the Catholic and Anglican churches together with a state public school. That's the type of outcome you can get by working together and breaking the conventional wisdoms.”

While developers are often cast as the bad guys, Mr Banks said good developers wanted to make a positive contribution.

“Industry wants to construct healthy urban communities – they don't want to create urban ghettos,” he said.

Mr Scafton agreed. “I am confident we can work closely with all the players and turn a good set of ideas into better outcomes on the ground. Future communities will be the winners from this.”

### Community Services

The GAA is working with six growth area Council's to support the Planning for Social Infrastructure in Growth Area Communities local area planning initiative led by Wyndham for the six growth area Council's. This project will research existing standards and consult with stakeholders to establish agreement on standards for provision of social and community infrastructure in growth areas.

### GAA meets with developers and Councils

Prof Lyndsay Neilson, Secretary, Department of Sustainability and Environment hosted a lunch for developers and industry organisations with senior officials from government agencies to brief them on GAA on 31 August 2006.

The GAA provided a briefing to Council CEOs on 25 August 2006.

### Growth Area Framework Plans

The Growth Area Framework Plans were finalized by the Government on 1 September 2006. They outline: the long term direction of urban growth; location of broad development types, for example activity centers, residential, employment and mixed use employment; major transport networks and regional open space networks.

To view the current Plans visit [www.gaa.vic.gov.au/FrameworkPlans](http://www.gaa.vic.gov.au/FrameworkPlans)

## What's Happening Where: Precinct Structure Plans

A wide range of Precinct Structure Plans are currently being developed across Melbourne's five growth areas. These have been initiated by Councils and reflect the priorities outlined in the Growth Area Framework Plans. The GAA will work in partnership with Councils and provide support and guidance in accordance with the principles and measures outlined in the Precinct Structure Planning Guidelines.

This work includes detailed plans for housing yields, activity centres, road networks, public transport, open space and recreation facilities.

### CARDINIA

Cardinia Road Precinct Structure Plan encompasses the area south of Peck Road to the Pakenham Bypass and is adjacent to the Officer precinct. The plan contains seven retail areas of various sizes, two employment precincts, open space and community facilities. It also includes a new railway station and a mix of residential densities to provide a self contained place to live and work with good access to retail, recreational and community services.

Officer Precinct Structure Plan is currently being developed. Detailed planning has taken place for a parcel of land between the railway reserve and Princes Freeway, abutting Cardinia Road. This development is for a new residential community with access to schools, a retail area, a regional park and an equestrian centre.

### CASEY

Cranbourne West Strategic Planning Project is scheduled to start this month. The project will comprise background research and specialist reports including environmental, economic and social analysis for the area.

### HUME

Craigieburn Strategic Plan is currently underway. It involves background research and specialist reports such as environmental, economic and social analysis to prepare detailed Precinct Structure Plans for the area.

### MELTON

Toolern Precinct Structure Plan is currently being developed. Toolern is strategically significant as the area will soon need to take up the rapid growth currently taking place in Caroline Springs. Future structure planning for Toolern will allow for a major employment and transit node including a mix of quality housing, a better gateway to Melton and development of an open space network along the creeks south of Melton.

### WHITTLESEA

Epping North East Precinct Structure Plan is a plan for a new residential community in Epping North bounded by Craigieburn Road, the Hume Freeway and Findon Road. The area contains local and regional open space, four retail areas, schools and several mixed use precincts for residential, retail and commercial uses.

### WYNDHAM

Truganina Employment Precinct Structure Plan is in the early stages of development. It will create a well designed employment precinct with good access to public transport and a neighbourhood retail and commercial centre.

## Developers Contribute to Better Communities

Developers will make contributions to vital community infrastructure under a plan to build liveability in Melbourne's five growth areas.

The **Initial State Development Contributions Plan** is a mechanism for development contributions for future State infrastructure and services in the growth areas of Casey-Cardinia, Hume, Melton-Caroline Springs, Whittlesea and Wyndham.

The Victorian Government announced it would introduce development contributions for State infrastructure and services in November 2005 as part of its policy framework, *A Plan for Melbourne's Growth Areas*.

For many years local Councils have collected contributions from developers for essential infrastructure such as roads and utilities but under the new plan contributions will now also be collected for State infrastructure.

These contributions will be centrally collected by the Growth Areas Authority (GAA) and extended to a broader range of infrastructure projects.

GAA Chief Executive Officer, Mr Mike Scrafton, said the contributions would ensure the construction of bike paths, sporting grounds, libraries and neighbourhood houses, as well as new bus routes and environmental works.

*"The idea is to have these facilities in place as residents are moving into new neighbourhoods, rather than many years later as has happened in the past."*

The Initial State Contributions Plan requires a one-off payment or negotiated in-kind works from developers to contribute towards the cost of infrastructure and services for new communities.

It provides a standard method for contributing a proportion of the cost of State infrastructure and services required for any development.

The GAA is responsible for administering and collecting Initial State Development Contributions. Contributions will vary as different developments have varying infrastructure and service requirements.



GAA staff CEO and Chairman at our new office, 35 Spring St Melbourne

“The GAA will help to create healthy, vibrant and strong communities by encouraging a sense of place and belonging for residents, and by providing them with a range of housing choices, facilities and community services.”

Carol Schwartz AM

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