

Tuesday 14 October, 2008

NEW PUSH TO BRING JOBS TO URBAN GROWTH HOTSPOTS

Leading figures from across Melbourne's development industry will meet government and council officers today to discuss how to improve the balance between where Melburnians live and where they work.

Growth Areas Authority chief executive officer Peter Seamer said planners and developers have to work on redressing the geographic jobs imbalance.

"Half of all Melbourne's new population growth is happening in the city's five outer urban growth areas - but only around 31 per cent of all new jobs growth is following suit," Mr Seamer said.

"Petrol pricing has doubled and with the distance travelled to employment increasing, we don't want people travelling seven hours a week, if they can spend two and have the rest of the time with their family.

"We need to reverse the trend, and we need the development industry and our strategic planners to find better ways to plan for more self-sufficient, sustained communities with access to jobs and facilities closer to where people live.

"The community doesn't want dormitory suburbs next to big shopping centres. What we need to do is bring all kinds of jobs to where people live," Mr Seamer said.

The roundtable will discuss how better strategic planning in the five growth areas of Casey, Cardinia, Hume, Melton, Whittlesea and Wyndham can deliver more localised communities that will also have offices and community facilities and not just retail outlets.

Mr Seamer said the GAA will also brief the forum on new guidelines for master planning new communities that will embed jobs growth targets into every new Precinct Structure Plan.

"Melton residents have an average travel distance to work of almost 20 kms - the problem isn't that Melton could be viewed as too far away - but that there are too few jobs there," he said.

Today's roundtable meeting will bring together some of the best practical thinkers from across the development industry, councils and industry groups who will hear how increasing petrol prices, rapid growth and the increasing environmental impacts of car reliance are changing authorities' approach to planning.

Mr Seamer said Melbourne is much more centralised than cities with similar population sizes.

"We know from work the GAA commissioned that in the past people haven't rated the location of their work highly when deciding where to live because the quality of life in the suburbs has been so attractive.

"With the true cost of travel now evident at the petrol pump, the community wants better planning solutions," he said.