

SUMMARY REPORT



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FOREWORD



From left to right: Professor John Dewar – La Trobe University; Cr Rex Griffin – City of Whittlesea; The Hon Dr Denis Napthine MP – Premier of Victoria; Cr Roberto Colanzi – City of Yarra; Cr Craig Langdon – Banyule City Council; Cr Peter Perkins – Nillumbik Shire Council; Cr Tim Laurence – City of Darebin; Mr Craig Ondarchie MP – State Member for Northern Metropolitan Region

The **Melbourne's North: Now and Tomorrow Summit** brought together regional leaders to discuss the need for a shared vision and more effective strategic partnerships and regional planning for Melbourne's North.

Participants were leaders from across Melbourne's North representing government, business, industry, education and the community sector. Over 200 people attended, demonstrating a strong commitment to the process from stakeholders.

The Summit focused on key issues facing the region today, providing a timely opportunity for the exchange of ideas and insights into the region's future, and exploring options for cooperative action on a regional basis.

It provided a forum for sharing and developing big ideas that have the potential to address issues and developing partnerships that will accelerate their implementation.

In opening the Summit the Premier of Victoria, the Hon Dr Denis Napthine MP, emphasised the importance of partnerships and of taking a regional approach to major initiatives and priorities.

A special feature of the Summit was the themed Working Groups, which provided insight into specific areas. There was also strong interest by those in attendance for continued involvement and input into the future planning of the region.

The overwhelming feedback on the Summit was positive and has created a momentum for increased regional collaboration to meet current and future challenges.

It is recommended that the Mayors and CEOs Forum, NORTH Link and the Northern Melbourne RDA be responsible for regional coordination, with activities commencing immediately.

Professor John Dewar
Vice-Chancellor and President
La Trobe University

Mr Bob McQuillen
Chair
Northern Melbourne RDA

Mr Chris Heysen
Chair
NORTH Link

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Melbourne's North is a great place to live, work and raise a family. However, as a region, we are confronted with significant challenges.

Our population continues to grow at a staggering rate and we must ensure that we are ready to drive the aspirations and meet the needs and opportunities of the future.

Now more than ever, state and federal governments are looking to partner with and fund projects that have a regional focus. So we must concentrate on regional initiatives that will strengthen the foundations of our state and the nation.

Developing a shared vision for Melbourne's North is a big job requiring stakeholders and governments at every level to work together.

The Melbourne's North Now and Tomorrow Regional Summit, held on 24 July 2013, was the first step in an ongoing initiative.

Prior to the Summit, conversation cafes were conducted with key stakeholders from across Melbourne's North. The information generated from the conversations was considered by Summit participants, along with stimulating presentations by Summit theme chairs – all experts in their field.

Five overall recommendations were put forward by the Summit participants:

1. One Region, One Voice, One Plan

It was agreed that the future of Melbourne's North is best served by working together to establish a clearly defined vision for the region, an agreed Regional Plan, and a preferred pathway to achieve the Plan. The agreed task is to work together, starting immediately, to retain what we have and build a strong and vibrant future for the region.

The Regional Plan would need to encompass all aspects of the region:

- > Growing Business and Industry, and Fostering Innovation
- > Promoting Education and Developing Human Capital
- > Building a Healthy Community
- > Fostering the Arts and Culture
- > Transport and Infrastructure for the Future
- > Securing Environmental Sustainability
- > Stimulating the Digital Economy



2. One Voice, One Driver

The Summit clearly identified the need and opportunity for increased regional coordination to drive the development and delivery of regional planning. It is recommended the Mayors and CEOs Forum, NORTH Link and the Northern Melbourne RDA be responsible for regional coordination, with activities commencing immediately.

3. Evidence based advocacy

The Summit recommended that a Research Foundation is established in conjunction with the tertiary institutions (La Trobe and RMIT Universities) to provide:

- > Regional data – aggregated across all local government areas (LGAs)
- > Evidence based establishment and monitoring of key benchmarks (economic, environmental, social and cultural)
- > Issues papers and research-led discussions on challenges and best practice applicable to Melbourne's North

4. Regional ICT and Technology Hub

The Summit recommended the establishment of a Northern Regional ICT Hub that is underpinned by collaboration between business and government. It was agreed that Melbourne's North has the existing infrastructure and service providers to enable the region to lead technological innovation in each of the Summit theme areas.

5. Branding

The Summit supported the differentiation of Melbourne's North through the development of an iconic brand and marketing campaign focused on the region's pride, core strengths and changing dynamic. The outcome from this campaign would be a strong regional identity for Melbourne's North.

For each of the themes discussed at the Summit, participants identified a goal, determined the critical challenges and most exciting opportunities, and made recommendations for action.

The Goals

Growing Business and Industry, and Fostering Innovation

Foster a sustainable, networked economy in Melbourne's North by creating the right jobs in the right places to match population growth. Develop a sustainable job market that capitalises on the strengths of Melbourne's North and retains the talent contained in its demographic.

Promoting Education and Developing Human Capital

Deliver on a coherent vision of education that is well aligned, responsive to diversity, supports aspiration, and is effectively resourced to contribute to the economic and human wellbeing of Melbourne's North.

Building a Healthy Community

Establish One Region, One Vision, One Framework for community wellbeing providing healthy connected neighbourhoods of liveable housing close to services and jobs, where more people ride, walk and connect.

Fostering the Arts and Culture

Create a strong, unified voice that ensures Melbourne's North becomes identified with arts, culture and design.

Transport and Infrastructure for the Future

Develop an integrated decision making model and funding plan for the provision of transport and other infrastructure across Melbourne's North which:

- > Shifts a significant number of people to public transport
- > Localises more movement and access across and within the region
- > Responds at a regional and local level to changing demographics and social needs
- > Reduces energy and greenhouse gas emissions and
- > Uses data and technology to produce smarter solutions

Securing Environmental Sustainability

Ensure that the growth in Melbourne's North is healthy, prosperous and sustainable.

Stimulating the Digital Economy

Create an exemplar Northern Region ICT hub that is underpinned by collaboration between business and government.

The overarching regional recommendations on pages 4 and 5 were derived from thematic discussions during the course of the Summit. More information about each of these themes, what was discussed, key challenges and opportunities identified, and discrete recommendations related to each theme are detailed on pages 6 to 12.

The implementation of these theme related recommendations will be further considered in the development of the agreed Regional Plan.

REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS



One Region, One Vision, One Plan

The Melbourne's North Summit determined that the future of Melbourne's North is best served by working together to establish a clearly defined vision for the region, an agreed Regional Plan, and a preferred pathway to achieve the Plan.

The Regional Plan would need to encompass all aspects of the region:

- > Growing Business and Industry, and Fostering Innovation
- > Promoting Education and Developing Human Capital
- > Building a Healthy Community
- > Fostering the Arts and Culture
- > Transport and Infrastructure for the Future
- > Securing Environmental Sustainability
- > Stimulating the Digital Economy

It is recommended that challenges, opportunities and actions identified in the lead-up to the Summit and at the Summit are used to inform the Regional Plan, along with Council Visions, Council Plans, and existing regional strategies and research documents.

One Voice, One Driver

The Summit clearly identified the need for regional planning and for key stakeholders to work across borders to drive and develop a whole of region strategy accompanied by a clearly defined implementation plan.

Regional planning and coordination is essential to:

- > Combine the aspirations and priorities of all LGAs and key stakeholders into a cohesive prioritised, agreed direction accompanied by targets that take into account the best interests of the whole region and the priorities of *Plan Melbourne*
- > Build on and complement existing strategic plans including those of the Northern Melbourne RDA, NORTH Link and local councils
- > Work with the Mayors and CEOs Forum, NORTH Link and the Northern Melbourne RDA to attract funding for defined priorities
- > Establish cross regional coordination mechanisms (such as Taskforces) for each of the Summit themes where they do not already exist
- > Conduct an Annual Forum for feedback on actions and evidence
- > Investigate and implement the overall recommendations of the Melbourne's North Summit
- > Advocate for regional priorities with one voice to federal and state government, and provide a conduit for the engagement of industry and business to deliver outcomes in partnership with government

The Summit clearly identified the importance of regional coordination to drive the development and delivery of regional planning. It is recommended the Mayors and CEOs Forum, NORTH Link and the Northern Melbourne RDA be responsible for regional coordination, with activities commencing immediately.



Evidence based advocacy

In each of the theme discussions, Summit participants identified the need for research, data tailored to Melbourne's North, and evidence of achievement of region-wide indicators.

It is recommended that a Research Foundation is established in conjunction with the tertiary institutions (La Trobe and RMIT Universities) to provide:

- > Regional data – aggregated across all LGAs
- > Evidence based establishment and monitoring of key benchmarks (economic, environmental, social and cultural)
- > Issues papers and research-led discussions on challenges and best practice applicable to Melbourne's North

Two bodies known for this work are the Hunter Valley Research Foundation and the Western Research Institute (NSW).

HVRF is a not-for-profit, independent research organisation, renowned for its high quality and rigorous research. Established in 1956, its mission is to be a Centre of Excellence in community and regional research, with the aim of helping people make better decisions.

A key quarterly publication reports a program of critical social and economic research for the region, which is unique in regional Australia.

Regional ICT and Technology Hub

The Summit recommended the establishment of a Northern Regional ICT Hub.

The two successful examples cited at the Summit were Ballarat ICT and ICT Geelong.

Ballarat ICT Ltd is a not-for-profit partnership of industry, government and educational institutions dedicated to sustaining and growing a globally competitive ICT industry in Ballarat.

The Vision is that 'Ballarat will become acknowledged internationally for the strength and innovativeness of its ICT industry, the strategic use of ICT by lead users in the region, and the rapid diffusion and effective use of new technologies by its community.'

ICT Geelong is the representative voice and peak body of the ICT industry in the Geelong region. Our foundation members are industry leaders from the private sector, experts from tertiary education institutions and community leaders from the public sector.

The Vision is: 'To establish the Geelong region as a major Victorian ICT precinct, and act as a significant player in the State Government's vision to position Victoria as a globally recognised ICT region.'

Melbourne's North has the existing infrastructure and service providers to enable the region to lead technological innovation in each of the Summit theme areas.

Branding

The Summit supported the differentiation of Melbourne's North through the development of an iconic brand and marketing campaign, focused on the region's pride, core strengths and changing dynamic.

The Summit participants recommended that a regional identity is developed for Melbourne's North.

SUMMIT THEME 1

Growing Business and Industry, and Fostering Innovation

The automotive sector is one of the three main industry sectors in Melbourne's North, along with food processing, and chemical production and processing.

Industry in Melbourne's North is in transition. Manufacturing plants such as Ford's Broadmeadows plant are closing, with a knock-on effect to supplier manufacturers. Old industrial sectors located in Melbourne's inner north are relocating to more affordable industrial estates in Melbourne's outer north, and transitioning from traditional manufacturing to high-tech expert manufacturing, mostly for export.

The transition of manufacturing from the inner northern suburbs has created an economic transition to a 'knowledge economy', developing and commercialising new ideas. The retail sector is a critical employer and ranges from boutique inner city shops through to Northland, the largest retail employment sector in Melbourne's North.

Quick facts about business and industry in Melbourne's North:

- > Retail is the largest employer; manufacturing is the second largest and shrinking
- > Manufacturing has fallen from 26.5% of the region's gross product in 1998 to 16.3% in 2011
- > Manufacturing is still the biggest contributor (by far) to gross regional product

Goal

Foster a sustainable, networked economy in Melbourne's North by creating the right jobs in the right places to match population growth. Develop a sustainable job market that capitalises on the strengths of Melbourne's North and retains the talent contained in its demographic.

Key Challenges

- > Decline of manufacturing sector and the direct impact on Melbourne's North, requires a shift to new, sustainable sectors
- > Shifting entrenched perceptions of Melbourne's North, 'more than just manufacturing'
- > Need for business and education to better align to provide a stronger linkage between training, employment needs and a changing demographic profile

Key Opportunities

- > Use the existing quality of living and amenities to sell Melbourne's North to a young, energetic demographic
- > Leverage the multicultural elements of Melbourne's North to network local industry with international markets
- > Combine local research infrastructure, supply chains, and connections with suppliers to shift the economic focus to the emerging food and food sciences sectors

Recommendations

1. Encourage mixed-use developments that focus on proximity between jobs and housing as reflected in Growth Corridor Plans and the *Plan Melbourne*
2. Provide affordable and flexible accommodation to support micro-business
3. Secure at least three major projects for the region including:
 - > Secondary selective school
 - > 5 star hotel
 - > International business headquarters
4. Develop key economic performance indicators for Melbourne's North in order to assess progress and to be utilised as a promotional tool
5. Promote the liveability of Melbourne's North and shift the negative perception across metropolitan Melbourne in order to attract knowledge class, business owners and initiators, and decision makers
6. Increase Melbourne North's ability to support international trade projected to grow through research, health, food and tertiary industry
7. Harness the energy of a younger demographic through:
 - > Enabling young creative people to start businesses
 - > Retain a younger demographic within Melbourne's North
 - > Use local (culturally) diverse talent to facilitate engagement with international markets
8. Improve the supply chain relationships within the food industry including relationships with source regions
9. Identify and secure new and proposed employment clusters in Melbourne's North
10. Develop a jobs plan based around population growth that seeks to create clear pathways for young people, raises retention rate post-secondary and emphasises access to jobs

SUMMIT THEME 2

Promoting Education and Developing Human Capital

The provision of primary and secondary education institutions across Melbourne's North, both government and private, varies by LGA in numbers of schools, and quality of service provision. A key challenge is the provision of new schools, staff, and infrastructure required to accommodate the massive influx of young families in Melbourne's outer north.

There are high contrasts in education provision and education engagement across Melbourne's North. For example, in Whittlesea there is high demand for localised education to reduce high travel times for students, and new infrastructure funding has been announced for a secondary school in Doreen. In Hume, approximately 50% of 15-19 year olds are not enrolled in education and are registered as looking for work. In Yarra, there is close proximity to some of Australia's most prestigious and prominent schools.

TAFE and universities are present in Melbourne's North. The main providers of TAFE education are Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT) and Kangan Institute. The universities are La Trobe University and RMIT Bundoora. In addition, distance education programs have recently been established at the Hume Global Learning Centre in Broadmeadows by Deakin and Victoria Universities. These programs will provide local access to higher education pathways.

La Trobe University is currently implementing its 'Future Ready' Plan which stipulates the university will greatly increase its engagement with community groups, industry and business in Melbourne's North. RMIT offers many of its health sciences, medical, and engineering courses at Bundoora which relates well to the importance of construction, manufacturing, social and health services in the region.

Goal

Deliver on a coherent vision of education that is well aligned, responsive to diversity, supports aspiration, and is effectively resourced to contribute to the economic and human wellbeing of Melbourne's North.

Key Challenges

- > Understanding the drivers for rapid change in Melbourne's North, in a way that responds to cultural and socio-economic diversity
- > There is a current perception of disconnect between education providers, the education they are providing for students, and employer needs
- > Packaging education differently to meet the needs of students, improve the quality of student experience, and provide clear pathways so that educational development and up-skilling can occur both within and beyond the classroom

Key Opportunities

- > Increase participation in education, and focus on lifelong learning
- > Provide opportunities to match the needs and requirements of students with the skills required in business and industry in Melbourne's North - this includes re-skilling
- > Plan for education in times of constraint by thinking differently, including encouraging and supporting flexible delivery, online learning, flexible use of infrastructure, and flexible use of space

Recommendations

1. Establish a regular consultative mechanism between education providers (schools, TAFE and universities) and business and industry to align the provision of education and skills with the needs of Melbourne's North
2. Promote shared use of facilities on educational sites including buildings, infrastructure, sports fields and libraries
3. Develop a promotions campaign targeting all communities (including culturally diverse communities) aimed at promoting lifelong learning
4. Map service delivery and (potentially) integrated educational pathways and opportunities in Melbourne's North

SUMMIT THEME 3

Building a Healthy Community

The population of Melbourne's North is diverse in age, background, income status and employment. In the cities of Darebin, Hume, Moreland and Whittlesea over 40% of residents speak a language other than English at home (the Victorian average is 24%). All the LGAs, with the exception of Nillumbik and Banyule, have above the Victorian average of new settler arrivals.

The region has experienced population growth of 136,556 over the past 10 years. Forecasts indicate that Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Whittlesea, Yarra and Mitchell will have a combined population growth of nearly 390,000 over the next 20 years. More than 25% of Melbourne's population growth is targeted for Melbourne's North, particularly Hume and Whittlesea.

The Growth Areas Authority has released a plan to grow the outer north of Melbourne to accommodate at least 260,000 people. The plan also provides for employment of at least 83,000 people in new industrial landscapes to be located within the North Growth Corridor.

Developing and maintaining community connectedness, population health challenges, and meeting demand for services are all pressures arising from the changing demographic and fast growth of sections of Melbourne's North.

Goal

Establish One Region, One Vision, One Framework for community wellbeing providing healthy connected neighbourhoods of liveable housing close to services and jobs, where more people ride, walk and connect.

Key Challenges

- > Across Melbourne's North there are many service providers including local government, state government agencies, not for profit funded groups and private service providers. There are key challenges in understanding who provides what (services and funding), and sharing resources or collaborating for the best outcomes.
- > The lifestyle of individuals can lead to ill health and social isolation. Travel time is a compounding factor in reduced family and community connection time.
- > Different cultures have different ways of interacting and this can be challenging for service providers to adapt to.



Key Opportunities

- > There is a clear opportunity to develop an icon or identity for Melbourne's North, creating pride and a shared sense of purpose and direction, and building economies of scale and advocacy capacity.
- > With rapid population growth, there is an opportunity to work together to plan meaningful services early in the development of the newer suburbs.
- > Joint ventures and partnerships between councils to share successful health and wellbeing programs can build on the goodwill and collaboration developed at the Melbourne's North Summit.

Recommendations

1. Work across all LGAs for regional collaboration for community and health infrastructure and services planning ahead of the growth demand – resulting in the **Melbourne's North Health and Wellbeing Plan**. This approach incorporates the social environments of health: built, natural, social and economic. It is acknowledged that all LGAs have developed Community Health and Wellbeing Plans – this is the opportunity to combine those plans and support regional priorities, ahead of rapidly changing demand.
2. Ensure new development areas are required to take an holistic approach based on healthy community principles
3. Create regional community health benchmarks so that changes in community health and wellbeing can be measured (by region and by LGA, and compared to other regions, state and national indices)

SUMMIT THEME 4

Fostering the Arts and Culture

Across Melbourne's North, there is a contrast in access to and participation in arts and cultural activities.

Melbourne's inner north is home to a large number of artisans. Most inner-city residents are spoilt for choice when it comes to art and cultural activities in their area. The outer, less wealthy suburbs are not as lucky.

This contrast reflects the nature of the different communities of Melbourne's North. Leafy Nillumbik contains the artisan suburb of Eltham; Whittlesea and Hume are both peri-urban manufacturing/suburban districts; inner-urban Moreland, Darebin, and Yarra represent old manufacturing and a new bohemian/cultural scene. Banyule has a cross section of these features. The suburb of Heidelberg in Banyule is the birthplace of the 'Heidelberg School' – a form of Australian Impressionism used popularly in Australian bush landscape paintings.

Goal

Create a strong, unified voice that ensures Melbourne's North becomes identified with arts, culture and design.

Key Challenges

- > Developing strong visibility for Melbourne's North as a place for arts, design and culture. This challenge includes the need for effective lobbying and support for arts, design and culture in Melbourne's North.
- > Understanding the needs and demographics of all seven LGAs through research based evidence, to show that there is a genuine need for investment in arts and culture, and the benefits of that investment.
- > Identifying existing spaces and resources for artistic creation, display and performance across Melbourne's North, so that current asset use can be optimised.

Key Opportunities

- > Develop an integrated approach to arts and culture across all aspects of local government
- > Put an emphasis on multi-cultural engagement, particularly in the outer North
- > Create a festival or cultural event to unify the community and strengthen the cultural identity of Melbourne's North



Recommendations

1. Establish quarterly forums with participation from the seven LGAs and other key stakeholders including artists and education providers
2. Undertake a comprehensive audit of all arts and cultural infrastructure across Melbourne's North to identify current assets and gaps. This audit should also clearly identify potential spaces for arts-related business incubator/s, and underutilised public spaces that could be used for arts and cultural activities
3. Establish a yearly Arts and Cultural Festival, held simultaneously across the seven LGAs, to promote current successes and encourage participation in arts and cultural activities including live music and performing arts
4. Harness digital technology to promote arts and culture, create community involvement, and encourage mobilisation by developing appropriate apps and websites
5. Develop a 'mentoring' relationship between LGAs with a stronger arts and cultural base (Yarra, Darebin, Moreland) and the emerging suburbs

SUMMIT THEME 5

Transport and Infrastructure for the Future

The region is sectioned by the Hume and Tullamarine Freeways, and the Western Ring Road, all major freight routes.

Melbourne International Airport, a curfew free airport with nationally significant freight and passenger movements, is located within Hume. It is the largest employment area outside the Melbourne CBD.

Melbourne's North has three main types of critical transport infrastructure: roads, rail, and freight rail. Freight and public infrastructure planning varies in its aims, however many of the challenges such as space, building cost, project initiation, and future planning remain the same across all areas. Mostly, transport infrastructure is designed to radiate from the CBD, resulting in inadequate public transport connections and poor connectivity between corridors.

Rapid population growth is outstripping transport services and infrastructure (such as health, energy and employment).

The knock-on impacts from inadequate transport and infrastructure are not fully known, but affect family life, community connectivity, and business efficiency and productivity.

Goal

Develop an integrated decision making model and funding plan for the provision of transport and other infrastructure across Melbourne's North which:

- > Shifts a significant number of people to public transport
- > Localises more movement and access across and within the region
- > Responds at a regional and local level to changing demographics and social needs
- > Reduces energy and greenhouse gas emissions
- > Uses data and technology to produce smarter solutions

Key Challenges

- > Developing a single, integrated regional funding/timing model for infrastructure and transport across the entire region
- > Change behaviours to increase awareness and usage of existing transportation services
- > Smarter use of existing infrastructure/reconfiguration

Key Opportunities

- > Being much smarter with our planning and funding models in order to better utilise our assets
- > Change existing travel and movement patterns and practices through innovation in elements such as education, freight delivery, and work patterns. Improve localised movement patterns that limit congestion.
- > Opportunity for councils to work together and implement coordinated development throughout the region.

Recommendations

1. Develop an **Integrated Regional Infrastructure and Transport Plan** with stated and agreed funding priorities. A study of infrastructure provision and future needs in Melbourne's North, initiated by Northern Melbourne RDA, NORTH Link, La Trobe University, the seven metropolitan councils and the Shire of Mitchell, will be completed in November 2013 and will provide the evidence base for this Plan.
2. Provide a single forum for councils to work together, and with relevant federal and state government departments and agencies, to implement an agreed set of coordinated initiatives throughout the region, including better utilisation of current assets
3. Undertake a regional and local level behavioural change program that focuses on smarter use of current assets (such as roads and highways, walking and cycling), access to facilities, delivery and coordination of services, employment and community nodes and significantly improve the capacity for increased localised movements to limit regional level congestion and the need for persons and goods to traverse the region or travel outside of the region
4. Work with Melbourne Airport to identify improved collaboration and strategies in which Melbourne's North can sustain this vital asset and capitalise on its economic and infrastructural significance

SUMMIT THEME 6

Securing Environmental Sustainability

The manufacturing powerhouse of the region's economy is in transition, and there is a drive to shift from high emissions technologies to low emissions technologies as well as a demand for environmentally efficient products including energy saving products. Manufacturing is one sector in which change is occurring. Industries such as transport, food production, construction and retail are all being revolutionised by consumer choice and government programs.

Melbourne's North has the potential to hold a competitive position as a leader in Victoria and Australia in the renewable energy market. The Moreland Energy Foundation has been working towards making Moreland City Council carbon neutral since 2007. The Yarra Energy Foundation and the City of Yarra invite everyone who lives, works, studies or volunteers in the City of Yarra to seize power through 'Yarra Project Zero' to achieve zero carbon living, learning and earning by 2020.

Melbourne's North is mostly urbanised, with the exception of areas within Nillumbik, and the northern parts of Whittlesea and Hume. Community initiatives to reclaim green space are being undertaken throughout the region with goals of delivering greening projects, protecting green wedge space, resisting developments that impinge on community green space and improving water quality in urban waterways.

Goal

Ensure that the growth in Melbourne's North is healthy, prosperous, and sustainable

Key Challenges

- > Address the present situation of traffic congestion and lack of public transport, through better integration of land-use, localised jobs and services, and transport planning
- > Encourage behaviour changes that support environmental sustainability (such as moving away from car usage)
- > Eliminate barriers in building innovation, energy efficiency and sustainability
- > Use proposed population growth as leverage in increasing the importance of planning for sustainable growth

Key Opportunities

- > Stimulate sustainable growth in Melbourne's North by providing incentives for local production and consumption of renewable energy sources, and environmentally sustainable industries such as ecological food production, energy-efficient advanced manufacturing and resource recycling/recovery
- > Encourage local production and consumption of renewable energy sources, such as solar and biomass through community solar projects and neighbourhood micro grids
- > Plan and construct basic infrastructure, including sustainable transport services, ahead of residential, commercial and industrial developments

Recommendations

1. Develop an **Integrated Regional Sustainability Plan** involving business, education institutions, community and local governments
2. Balance regional growth subject to a measured cap on its ecological footprint, and accompanied by supportive value and behavioural changes across businesses and the general community
3. Stimulate sustainable growth in Melbourne's North by providing incentives for local production and consumption of renewable energy sources, environmentally sustainable industries such as ecological food production, energy efficient advanced manufacturing and resource recycling/recovery
4. Utilise the ICT Hub to provide more innovative ways of allowing business and industry in the region to be able to identify waste flow and reuse opportunities
5. Leverage from existing positive Council and other initiatives such as the Moreland Energy Foundation and Darebin City Zero Emissions Program
6. Develop a small business check list for Sustainable Business Decisions aimed at changing behaviours and reducing energy use and emissions production

SUMMIT THEME 7

Stimulating the Digital Economy

The digital economy underpins each of the other six themes discussed; it does not operate in isolation.

In terms of infrastructure, high speed connection in Melbourne's North is important, with connections to the NBN already occurring in Brunswick and South Morang. Small areas of Hume have been connected, with many other areas planned.

Currently ADSL2 is available across the majority of Melbourne's North, with few exceptions.

Digital hubs which connect people, ideas and infrastructure have been developed in other regions, notably Ballarat and Geelong.

As the change in the economy of Melbourne's North continues to shift, the emphasis on supporting technology and high tech jobs will increase. The move to a knowledge based economy in the inner north, and stimulation of changes in the increased use of technology to support manufacturing, will continue to be important.

Goal

Create an exemplar Northern Region ICT Hub that is underpinned by collaboration between business and government.

Key Challenges

- > Consequences of technology improvements, including closures of businesses and industries that have not kept up with technology change, or are unable to afford the investment
- > Technology accessibility in some areas due to lack of connectivity and consumer adoption due to lack of affordability, or lack of technological literacy
- > Lack of understanding of the risks and rewards in the digital economy, and a lack of connection between some businesses and IT (may be a result of fear of approaching the IT industry for advice)

Key Opportunities

- > Stimulate business investment in re-skilling and employment (linked to ICT)
- > Develop more effective collaboration across Melbourne's North so that ICT effectively underpins development, education and other sectors, and stimulates sharing of resources and collaboration
- > Using key international provocateurs to challenge our regional thinking



Recommendations

1. Establish a collaborative ICT platform across the LGAs to align initiatives across the region. This will encourage knowledge sharing, cost-reduction by leveraging initiatives, and avoiding duplication between councils. It will provide a continual collaboration framework to track progress and capture requirements across the northern regions as identified by key stakeholders.
2. Leverage the tertiary education institutions to become the physical points of presence for the Northern Region ICT Hub. Focus on key innovation themes and drive innovation in these fields. For example, a hub in accessibility solutions for the disabled, driving innovation for premium manufacturing services for global brands and driving educational reforms to meet the demands of industry
3. Attract investment to the Northern Regional ICT Hub through redirecting of government funding, leveraging grant funding, attracting private company investment and financial institutions.
4. Initiate visits by northern representatives to other regions to see how their ICT hubs have stimulated the region
5. Create opportunities to broaden the experience and thinking of industries, businesses, local government and the communities of Melbourne's North by bringing in international 'provocateurs' to effectively stimulate new ideas and lift the regional bar

Enquiries

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