

Enquiries: Liana Thompson - 9217 2262

19 January 2017

Hon Scott Morrison MP  
Treasurer  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Treasurer,

### **Federal Government Pre-Budget Submission for 2017/2018**

I am writing to highlight the City of Whittlesea's infrastructure and services priorities to be considered for inclusion in the 2017/2018 Federal Government budget.

Council acknowledges and appreciates recent investments by the Federal Government towards the Hume Freeway Interchange at O'Herns Road, which recognises the significant need for transport infrastructure in our municipality as one of the fastest growing areas in Australia. However, further investment is required to unlock substantial congestion that disadvantages our residents, and to ensure the economic and social growth of our communities.

The City of Whittlesea welcomes approximately 8,000 new residents annually and it is home to some of the nation's largest growing areas of South Morang, Mernda, Doreen, Epping and Wollert. Our current population in 2017 is 209,100 and this is expected to grow to 353,910 by 2037.

Significant investment is needed by all levels of government to not only keep pace with this growth, but to address a critical backlog in service provision and road and public transport needs.

A summary of the City of Whittlesea's highest priorities which require urgent investment is attached for consideration. Council is committed to addressing these matters and working in partnership with all levels of government to ensure the best outcomes for our residents. I would welcome an opportunity to discuss our priorities further. Please contact Liana Thompson, Director of Partnerships and Engagement on (03) 9217 2262 or email [liana.thompson@whittlesea.vic.gov.au](mailto:liana.thompson@whittlesea.vic.gov.au).

**Yours sincerely**



**Michael Wootten**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Growth

The City of Whittlesea is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. The City of Whittlesea welcomes approximately 8,000 new residents annually and is home to some of the nation's largest growing areas of South Morang, Mernda, Doreen, Epping and Wollert.<sup>i</sup> Our current population in 2017 is 209,100 and this is expected to grow to 353,910 by 2037.<sup>ii</sup>

Significant investment is needed by all levels of government to not just keep pace with this growth, but to address a critical backlog in service provision and road and public transport needs.

The City of Whittlesea is a proud member of the National Growth Areas Alliance, which represents those areas on the outskirts of capital cities designated to experience significant population growth. The City of Whittlesea supports the need for policy recognition at the federal level for growth areas, just as the Victorian Government has done through its Growing Suburbs Fund – a dedicated fund for ten interface councils on Melbourne's urban fringe.

It is well established that the fast growing outer suburbs are worse off than their metropolitan counterparts. Residents have poor access to jobs and services. This means:

- a lack of opportunities to work locally
- long commutes sitting on congested roads
- negative impact on the cost of living
- less time with families
- stress and health impacts contributed by all of the above.

Better services and transport are needed. The City of Whittlesea seeks:

- A dedicated investment package for the fast growing outer suburbs for strategic roads and rail and other transformational projects, with the quantum commensurate with starting to seriously tackle the current national backlog of \$50 billion
- A coordinated cross government focus on the fast growing outer suburbs
- Programs (whether existing or new) designed to meet the specific circumstances of fast growing outer suburbs
- In the roll out of more city deals, prioritise deals for outer growth areas.

What we want to achieve for the outer growth areas is:

- Reduced cost of living
- Better quality of life
- Easier/less commuting
- Better access to essential services
- Jobs closer to home
- Increased productivity.

## Unlock Congestion

Residents in Melbourne's fast growing outer suburbs are forced to spend 20 per cent longer commuting than people residing in inner suburbs. Many face higher living costs of thousands of dollars a year due to dependence on long commutes by car. They also face fewer job opportunities, heavy traffic congestion and a reduction in the quality of family and social life. The VicHealth Indicators Survey (2012) found that City of Whittlesea residents struggle with work and time pressures, which are often exacerbated by long commutes.

There is a critical need for road upgrades and public transport services to not only address a backlog of infrastructure needs, but to also keep pace with a rapidly growing population. A failure to act will result in an increased reliance on private vehicles as the dominant travel mode. Impacts include increased congestion and travel times for the community and businesses, inability to attract jobs and investment, fewer transport choices and harmful effects to community health and wellbeing.

Highest priorities for federal investment	Details
Hume Freeway Interchange (includes O'Herns Road duplication)	Deliver the Hume Freeway Interchange at O'Herns Road including the duplication of O'Herns Road and the upgrade of the Epping Road/High Street/ Findon Road/ O'Herns Road roundabout to a signalised intersection. The State Government has also committed to its share of this project.
Epping Road duplication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Memorial Drive to Findon Road</li> <li>Craigieburn Road East to O'Herns Road</li> </ul>
Bridge Inn Road duplication	Yan Yean Road to Plenty Road

## Family strengthening services

Children, young people and their families in the City of Whittlesea are facing multiple and complex challenges that are negatively impacting their health, learning and social outcomes. They demonstrate particular vulnerabilities that require targeted support to build resilience and improve health and wellbeing. Tailored place-based responses are required due to the significant diversity across the municipality.<sup>iii</sup>

Opportunity	Benefit
A dedicated Interface Family Support Fund to enable expansion of tailored services for families living in the interface.	Additional government investment in services and supporting infrastructure in Interface Council areas would address higher levels of demand and continuing gaps in social infrastructure experienced in these areas. Families in the interface need and deserve equitable access to services and should not be disadvantaged by growth or geographic distance. Services should have the flexibility to respond to the needs of each place and should address needs of all ages and stages of

Opportunity	Benefit
	development including early years, middle years, young people and family support services.
Provide on-going funding for Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (15 hours of kindergarten).	<p>Currently the Victorian Government funds 10 hours, and the Australian Government funds five hours, with the community contributing 35 per cent through parent fees, fundraising and council support. The National Partnership Agreement for this funding expires in December 2017. Continual short-term funding arrangements make it difficult for councils and kindergartens to plan, and is disruptive for parents.</p> <p>If the Australian Government does not continue to fund five of the 15 hours of kindergarten, parents in our municipality will face a potential 100 per cent fee hike, making kindergarten costs simply unaffordable for many. The direct knock on impact will see a reduction in participation and learning outcomes for our children.</p>
Family engagement facilitators and outreach to support families in new growth areas and associated brokerage funding (\$400,000 per annum for four years).	This program will deliver strength-based prevention and early intervention for vulnerable families to improve health and wellbeing outcomes. Evidence indicates that place-based strategies have a greater capacity for local relevance, community building and supporting children, young people and their families.
Ongoing operational funding for Bubup Wilam for Early Learning - Aboriginal Family and Children Centre. The centre currently requires \$900,000 per annum.	Bubup Wilam provides integrated and place-based support for children, their families and the broader community. The service is a unique and intensive service model which addresses multiple State and Federal government policy objectives in areas of early years development, Closing the Gap, family violence prevention and intervention, education and employment, family services reform and child protection.

## Family violence services

The City of Whittlesea has the highest rate of family violence incidents in Melbourne’s north east region and experiences differential access to associated services. Under-resourced regional services are unable to adequately respond to the increased demand from City of Whittlesea residents. In 2015/16 the rate of family violence incidents in the City of Whittlesea reported to police (1,451 per 100,000 residents) was 11.4% higher than the rate for Victoria (1,302 per 100,000 residents).<sup>iv</sup>

Opportunity	Benefit
<p>The Whittlesea CALD<sup>1</sup> Communities Family Violence Project (WCFVP) addresses additional barriers to accessing support and services needed by CALD people.<sup>v</sup></p> <p>The WCFVP is a transferable model with practice outcomes that have broader applicability across Victoria.</p>	<p>Local evidence reveals existing service responses in the municipality are not meeting the complex needs of CALD women experiencing family violence. A research and scoping exercise undertaken by the Whittlesea Community Futures Partnership has informed the development of this project as a new approach to addressing additional barriers to accessing support and services experienced by CALD people<sup>vi</sup>. Support for coordination of the WCFVP will sustain and build on existing project outcomes.</p>

## Supporting the development of young people

In 2017, approximately 42,700 young people aged 10 to 25 years old are living in the City of Whittlesea. By 2041 this will increase by 82% to 77,600.<sup>vii</sup> There are concerning vulnerabilities emerging in the community that impact on young people including family violence, and households under pressure experiencing financial and other stresses. Unacceptable numbers of young people are disengaging from education and employment and fewer are attending university or post-secondary education than inner urban areas.<sup>viii</sup> Local agencies are reporting young people presenting with complex interrelated issues including mental ill health. In Mission Australia’s recent Youth Survey (2016) respondents were asked to rank how concerned they had been about a number of issues in the past year. In the City of Whittlesea, the top issues of concern for young people were all closely related to mental health and wellbeing, including:

1. Coping with stress
2. School or study problems
3. Body image
4. Family conflict and
5. Depression.<sup>ix</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Opportunity	Benefit
<p>Accessible and coordinated mental health services for Whittlesea's young people.</p>	<p>Limited access to mental health services, stigma, prohibitive costs and lack of transport make it difficult for young people in Whittlesea to receive help.<sup>x</sup> Coordinated youth mental health services should be established to provide young people with access to local services which would ideally be developed in a hub including clinical and non-clinical mental health services and practitioners working in a partnership.</p> <p>Funding commitment to a Headspace satellite service in the City of Whittlesea via the Greensborough Headspace is also required.</p>
<p>Youth supported accommodation, for example a 15 bed Youth Foyer.</p>	<p>Specialist homelessness services in Whittlesea area report that they cannot keep up with the demand for housing and support services for young people in the municipality.<sup>xi</sup> A Youth Foyer would give young people access to local housing and support services and would help to alleviate homelessness.</p>

## Social and affordable housing

Investment in social and affordable housing infrastructure and appropriate support services is required to address significant unmet need in the City of Whittlesea. Social and affordable housing was recently prioritised in the Infrastructure Victoria 30-Year Infrastructure Plan for Victoria. There is an opportunity for the Federal government to partner with the Victorian Government and local government, housing providers, the private sector and other organisations to deliver innovative deliberative development models to provide and support growth of social and affordable housing.

Council also recommends the Federal government increase the one year funding extension announcement to the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH). A one-year extension will not provide the long-term certainty required to reduce homelessness in Australia. Currently around 80,000 Australians rely on this support every year, it is imperative the Federal Government extends funding beyond 30 June 2017.

It is also recommended that the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS), as with other mechanisms aimed at increasing private sector investment, be established as a permanent program with predictable, annual funding to allow certainty for investors and long term planning for housing providers.

## References

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<sup>i</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2015-16* (cat. no. 3218.0), <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3218.02014-15?OpenDocument>

<sup>ii</sup> Forecast.id, *City of Whittlesea Population Forecasts*, <http://forecast.id.com.au/whittlesea>, accessed 28 December 2016.

<sup>iii</sup> Centre for Community Child Health, *Place based approaches to supporting children and families*, 2012

<sup>iv</sup> Victoria Government, Crime Statistics Agency, *Family Incidences Data*, Oct 2015 to Sep 2016

<sup>v</sup> Whittlesea Community Connections, *Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project Annual Report*, September 2014 <http://www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/cald-family-violence-project.html>

<sup>vi</sup> Whittlesea Community Connections, *Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Scoping Exercise Report*, 2012, <http://www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/content/research-reports/>

<sup>vii</sup> Forecast.id, *Population Forecasts for the City of Whittlesea*, <http://forecast.id.com.au/whittlesea/data-export>, accessed 28 December 2016

<sup>viii</sup> Atlas.id, *City of Whittlesea Social Demographic Profile*, <http://atlas.id.com.au/whittlesea> accessed 28 December 2016

<sup>ix</sup> Mission Australia, *National Youth Survey*, 2016

<sup>x</sup> Access Economics, *Staying Connected: a cost benefit analysis of early intervention*, 2008

<sup>xi</sup> City of Whittlesea, *Human Services Needs Analysis*, 2013