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INTRODUCTION, GOAL AND PRINCIPLES

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Introduction

The purpose of State policy in planning schemes is to inform planning authorities and responsible authorities of those aspects of State level planning policy which they are to take into account and give effect to in planning and administering their respective areas. It is the State Government's expectation that planning and responsible authorities will endeavour to integrate the range of policies relevant to the issues to be determined and balance conflicting objectives in favour of net community benefit and sustainable development.

Planning policies are directed to land use and development, as circumscribed by the Planning and Environment Act 1987, a primary objective of which is to provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of land.

Planning, under the Planning and Environment Act 1987, is to encompass and integrate relevant environmental, social and economic factors. It is directed towards the interests of sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations, on the basis of relevant policy and legislation. Planning authorities and responsible authorities are responsible for the effective planning and management of land use and development in their districts for the broad interests of the community, through the preparation of strategic plans, statutory plans, development and conservation plans, development contribution plans, and other relevant plans to achieve the objectives of the Act.

The State Planning Policy Framework provides a context for spatial planning and decision making by planning and responsible authorities. It is comprised of a statement of general principles for land use and development planning and specific policies dealing with sectoral issues. The specific policies encompass objectives, generic implementation techniques applying across Victoria in relation to the specified policy and geographic strategies that set out directions for particular areas. Planning and responsible authorities must take account of and give effect to both the general principles and the specific policies applicable to issues before them to ensure integrated decision-making.

The State Planning Policy Framework is dynamic and will be built upon as the government develops and refines policy, and changed as the needs of the community change.

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Goal

The State Planning Policy Framework seeks to ensure that the objectives of planning in Victoria (as set out in Section 4 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987) are fostered through appropriate land use and development planning policies and practices which integrate relevant environmental, social and economic factors in the interests of net community benefit and sustainable development.

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Principles of land use and development planning

Society has various needs and expectations such as land for settlement, protection of the environment, economic well-being, various social needs, proper management of resources and infrastructure. Planning aims to meet these by addressing aspects of economic, environmental and social well-being affected by land use and development.

Following are seven statements of general principles that elaborate upon the objectives of planning in Victoria and describe the factors that influence good decision-making in land use and development planning. A planning authority preparing amendments to a planning scheme or a responsible authority administering a scheme must consider these overarching and interlocking principles as well as relevant specific policies in Clauses 14 to 19.

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Settlement

Planning is to anticipate and respond to the needs of existing and future communities through provision of zoned and serviced land for housing, employment, recreation and

open space, commercial and community facilities and infrastructure. Planning is to recognise the need for, and as far as practicable contribute towards:

- Health and safety.
- Diversity of choice.
- Adaptation in response to changing technology.
- Economic viability.
- A high standard of urban design and amenity.
- Energy efficiency.
- Prevention of pollution to land, water and air.
- Protection of environmentally sensitive areas and natural resources.
- Accessibility.
- Land use and transport integration.

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Environment

Environment and resource management principles for ecologically sustainable development have been established by international and national agreements. Foremost amongst the national agreements is the Inter-Governmental Agreement on the Environment, which sets out key principles for environmental policy in Australia. Other agreements include the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, National Greenhouse Response Strategy, the National Water Quality Management Strategy, The National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity and the National Forest Policy Statement. The National Environment Protection Council is preparing National Environment Protection Measures to provide a common policy framework for environmental quality throughout Australia.

These national agreements, strategies and policies provide a broad framework for the development of strategies and policies at the State level to encourage sustainable land use and development. In Victoria these include State environment protection policies made under the Environment Protection Act 1970, which are binding on all sectors of the Victorian community. The Flora and Fauna Guarantee Strategy (Victoria's Biodiversity, Department of Natural Resources and Environment 1997) provides a framework for conservation of biodiversity in Victoria, in the wider context of ecologically sustainable development. Victoria's Native Vegetation Management – a Framework for Action (Department of Natural Resources and Environment 2002), establishes the goal of Net Gain of native vegetation, and the principles for achieving this.

Planning is to contribute to the protection of air, land and water quality and the conservation of natural ecosystems, resources, energy and cultural heritage. In particular, planning should:

- Adopt a best practice environmental management and risk management approach which aims to avoid or minimise environmental degradation and hazards.
- Prevent environmental problems created by siting incompatible land uses close together.
- Help to protect the health of ecological systems and the biodiversity they support (including ecosystems, habitats, species and genetic diversity).
- Protect areas and sites with significant historic, architectural, aesthetic, scientific and cultural values.

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Management of resources

Planning is to assist in the conservation and wise use of natural resources including energy, water, land, flora, fauna and minerals to support both environmental quality and sustainable development over the long term through judicious decisions on the location, pattern and timing of development.

Integrated catchment planning for land use and resource management provides the basis for planning to protect waterways and water quality, and to minimise flood hazards, drainage infrastructure costs and downstream impacts, including on estuarine, coastal and marine environments.

Nine regional Catchment Management Authorities have been established across the State to lead planning for catchment management and be responsible for floodplain and river management outside metropolitan Melbourne, with the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority having responsibility for catchments including the metropolitan area. These authorities are responsible for overseeing sustainable land and water management and natural resource development within the framework of regional catchment strategies approved by the Minister for Environment.

Land Conservation Council recommendations approved by Government provide a context for management of resources on public lands and should be recognised as a significant component of integrated local area planning. When making planning decisions affecting Crown land, the role of the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Committees of Management as managers of Crown land must also be recognised.

11.03-4 Infrastructure

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Planning for development of urban physical and community infrastructure should enable it to be provided in a way that is efficient, equitable, accessible and timely. Growth and redevelopment of settlements should be planned in a manner that allows for the logical and efficient provision and maintenance of infrastructure, including the setting aside of land for the construction of future transport routes.

Strategic planning should facilitate efficient use of existing urban infrastructure and human services. Providers of urban infrastructure, whether public or private bodies, are to be guided by planning policies and should assist strategic land use planning. Planning authorities are to consider the use of development contributions (levies) in the funding of infrastructure.

11.03-5 Economic well-being

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Planning is to contribute to the economic well-being of communities and the State as a whole by supporting and fostering economic growth and development by providing land, facilitating decisions, and resolving land use conflicts, so that each district may build on its strengths and achieve its economic potential.

11.03-6 Social needs

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Planning is to recognise social needs by providing land for a range of accessible community resources, such as affordable housing, places of employment, open space, and education, cultural, health and community support (mental, aged, disabled, youth and family services) facilities. Land use and development planning must support the development and maintenance of communities with adequate and safe physical and social environments for their residents, through the appropriate location of uses and developments and quality of urban design.

11.03-7 Regional co-operation

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Some issues dealt with by planning and responsible authorities have impacts that extend beyond municipal boundaries. These impacts may be economic, social or environmental and particularly arise around such issues as coordinated planning for transport and water infrastructure, catchment management, including floodplain management and water quality protection, and waste management.

Consistent with the objectives of local government under the Local Government Act 1989, municipal planning authorities are required to identify the potential for regional impacts in their decision-making and co-ordinate strategic planning with their neighbours and other public bodies to achieve sustainable development and effective and efficient use of resources.