

9 November 2021

Doc No:

Ms Valerie Callister
Chairperson
Fire District Review

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Ms Callister

Re: VPA submission on Fire District Review Discussion Paper

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Fire District Review Proposed Risk Assessment Methodology Discussion Paper (the Discussion Paper) currently out on consultation. The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) has reviewed the Discussion Paper and provides this letter as our submission for your consideration.

The VPA values the vital relationship we have with both Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA). This submission seeks to explain our role, sets out how we can support planning for fire services infrastructure in growing urban areas, and makes suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of this support.

While the VPA makes no comment on the details of the jurisdictional arrangements between fire agencies, the VPA seeks a “single point of contact” that can provide authoritative advice and input to our plans and which enables us to maximise the integration of fire services planning and infrastructure into new urban areas as they are planned and delivered.

What the VPA does

The VPA is Victoria's specialist agency for urban growth planning. We map government policy into place, planning for new and renewing communities in designated urban growth areas across Victoria.

Since its founding in 2006 as the Growth Area Authority, the VPA has completed 70 structure plans for growth precincts in Outer Melbourne creating 350,000 lots, and is currently preparing 19 plans estimated to deliver another approximate 100,000 lots, with a further 60,000 lots to be delivered in the remaining 19 growth precincts.

The VPA also delivers homes and jobs in Victoria's regions, as well as renewal precincts in Metropolitan Melbourne. The VPA is currently programmed to deliver plans for 11 precincts in regional Victoria, and 4 precincts in Melbourne renewal areas.

Planning for the infrastructure needed to support urban growth is a key task in every VPA-planned precinct. To do this, the VPA secures advice from the specialist service planners in each of the providing agencies/entities and uses this advice to identify sites and set land aside to accommodate the required infrastructure. The VPA also ensure that surrounding land uses can be managed to protect infrastructure from incompatible development.

The VPA can also facilitate the early provision of the required infrastructure by preparing of Growth Area Infrastructure Contribution Work In Kind (GAIC WIK) agreements. Under these agreements, landowners liable to pay GAIC can instead opt to provide land in satisfaction of their GAIC liability, which results in land being vested in the relevant agency/entity with title with little or no direct financial outlay required from the receiving agency. Often this land is provided earlier and/or more cheaply than would otherwise be the case.

The VPA has facilitated nine GAIC WIK agreements with a total of 37 hectares of land delivered for schools, roads and police stations, delivering a saving to Government from 5-25% over the Valuer General valuations.

GAIC WIKs for capital works are also possible. The VPA has successfully negotiated a GAIC WIK agreement for a shared-use path, and is currently working on a GAIC WIK for construction of a freeway interchange.

How the VPA can assist FRV/CFA

Given the specialised role of the VPA, we can assist the relevant fire agency by:

Land use planning to mitigate and manage fire hazard

The VPA provides planning controls as part of our planning scheme amendments to manage and mitigate fire risk in urban growth areas. These include provisions requiring separation distance from fire threats as well as providing key access and egress from our precincts, particularly in areas that are subject to fire risk.

Setting aside land for key emergency services infrastructure

This includes identifying appropriate land, as well as potential colocation of community facilities as required. As identified in the Discussion Paper, understanding the various spatial and functional land-use requirements of fire service facilities across renewal, greenfield and regional areas is crucial to ensure emergency service facilities are appropriately planned for. This will enable FRV and CFA to request that land is identified in our Plans for emergency service facilities in the preparation of our PSPs. To this end, the VPA is able to share relevant GIS data upon request and if available.

Securing land and/or capital works for fire service infrastructure

The VPA can also facilitate GAIC WIK agreements to secure early delivery and save money on the purchase of land or construction of infrastructure.

What the VPA needs from FRV/CFA

To deliver on these opportunities, the VPA requires a strong relationship with the relevant agency. We require one authoritative, centralised point of comprehensive and integrated advice. This advice must be consistent across any fire district boundary and should clearly state both the requirement for emergency services facilities and the policy requirements to be embedded into the precinct.

These requirements must be “future proofed” so that they are “jurisdiction blind” – other words, they apply to no matter which agency/entity is responsible for owning or managing the infrastructure and they will survive any changes in jurisdictional arrangements between fire authorities.

The VPA also requires this advice to be provided in a timely manner, so as to not delay projects or require revisions to projects later in the process. The VPA has a dedicated period of agency engagement where this input is sought and can be accommodated before a broader consultation with the community.

The VPA would prefer that we have a single point of contact into the fire sector for all our planning work and which applies irrespective of which agency/entity is responsible for providing fire services (noting that this may well change over time). We do not believe it is desirable or efficient for us to have to engage two agencies in the early planning and identification of land-take needs for fire services infrastructure across our work program.

This advice needs to be future-proofed to acknowledge the transformation that occurs in precincts as they develop. It should ensure the land take required to facilitate any infrastructure is adequate irrespective of any changes to the fire district boundaries and the area is serviced by a different fire agency.

It should also be noted that, for the GAIC WIK mechanism to apply, the site(s) in question must be identified within the structure plan.

Pending further consideration of the VPA's request for a single integrated point of contact and advice into the fire services sector, the VPA will continue to work with both FRV and the CFA to ensure well planned urban communities are delivered across Victoria for the benefit and safety of all Victorians.

If you have any questions, please contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

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