

John Barnes  
245A Scott Parade  
Brown Hill, VIC 3350  
[jbarnesbal@gmail.com](mailto:jbarnesbal@gmail.com)  
0419 553 127

15 January 2015

Deon Van Baalen  
Manager Planning Strategy  
[deonvanbaalen@ballarat.vic.gov.au](mailto:deonvanbaalen@ballarat.vic.gov.au)

Dear Deon,

**Re: Submission on Preliminary Ballarat Strategy**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Preliminary Strategy. I hope you will find my views of interest.

I support the broad thrust of the Strategy, which to paraphrase, is to create a future Ballarat which is sufficiently densely populated to support a shift to public transport, and which offers a vibrant, verdant, and ecologically 'light' place in which to live and work, and in which few of life's necessities cannot be reached in around 10 minutes travel time. Achieving this will be no mean feat, but well worth striving toward.

I support the restraint on release of additional greenfields sites your paper recommends, though would wish to see some conditions put upon developers using the current supply of greenfields land to achieve far higher dwelling densities and tree canopy/public open space coverage (by going up, especially around ACs) as a condition to be met prior to the release of further land in the decades ahead. I look at Lucas and other areas in and abutting the BWGZ and shudder at the poor housing design and amenity offered in these new developments. I note with some satisfaction, that you are effectively ruling out the formerly named Federation Resort site from future development. Good on you! I note too your championing of the need for greenfields developments to pay their fair share of public infrastructure costs. I would like to see them pay all, as I think it unreasonable that existing properties are used to provide subsidies to these new areas -to those undeservedly getting rich by virtue of land being rezoned.

I note that a few of the ideas I espoused in my submission to you last May have appeared in this document, though to my disappointment, they are few, considering the number offered, and they are not expressed as succinctly as I was suggesting. A case in point is Initiative 1.1.3, which goes some way to picking up my point that we would benefit from a **“a mud map put together on how the borrowing capacity of Council might be used to create the greatest wealth for this community in future”** The whole issue of scenario planning has not happened, nor my approach of 'no regrets policies/initiatives' which would benefit future generations regardless of how the future plays out. I ask that you re-read my earlier submission, which I submit again with this document, as I think it relevant to the current Draft. I contend that you have massively underplayed the importance of climate change and the ability of Ballarat to make itself resilient in the face of this challenge. This goes to my comments on food production and proximity to waste water plants in my earlier submission. So too, to my comments on product stewardship by producers, packagers and distributors and the value of a national putsch by local government to shift the costs of kerbside waste collections back to the people responsible for it.

I offer the following observations in the hope that they may be included or at least assist you to find reconciliation where outcomes and policies seem at odds and are currently unresolved, within any future Draft Strategy you are preparing.

### **Some Further Observations on the Preliminary Strategy document**

Some of the language is confusing -unnecessarily so, in my opinion. The use of Regional Capital as a descriptor for both Ballarat (vis a vis Western Vic) and for precincts within Ballarat doesn't work. It is made even more confusing by the Ballarat Regional Capital Plan, which similarly confuses the term capital -referring to Ballarat's place in Western Vic &/or to it being a document lobbying for major *capital* works funding from the other levels of government. It is not always clear which is being discussed. Would it be too much to ask that the local precincts be called Growth Activity Centres, which to my mind picks up the additional precincts as well as the current activity centres (and their hierarchy)? "Orbital connections" surely means a ring road or roads, so why not call them that, and tell us where they exist currently and what augmentations are proposed. I have no idea what "expansion of community access and activation of Lake Wendouree for a wider range of users means", unless it is a bike share scheme for the Lake.

The 10 Minute City phrase is good to describe a principle that informs planning, though what is being proposed is not a continuation of being able to get from the CBD to the outskirts in 10 minutes, but to have basic needs met within 10 minutes, by foot or bike to a Growth Activity Centre, or to access public transport (or the dreaded car) to the PAC or MAC. Your aspiration for a 5 minute frequency to services is commended, and will be necessary to fulfil the 10 Minute City principle.

Reference is made to several documents that are not yet in the public domain, such as the Ballarat Economic Strategy (1.1.5); appropriate development contributions ( 3.4.2); Ballarat Environmental Controls (5.2.3) -this makes comments on some key issues for the Strategy impossible. How can we endorse these initiatives? Nor do we yet have a Sustainable Transport Strategy, though it appears certain key decisions are already made on the type of public transport system we will have (see comments below).

### **Unresolved tensions within the Preliminary Strategy**

Following on from the above is the failure within the Preliminary Strategy to tease out the issues that contradict or work against one another:

- How do we achieve the higher densities of dwellings in infill whilst dealing with: heritage issues (especially in the CBD); landscape/streetscape consistency and deference to local residents (3.5.2 & 5.3.3); and more than doubling tree canopy coverage (5.4.2)?
- An issue not even discussed, but crucial to higher density infill developments is fragmented land ownership. How is this to be addressed? How will suitable parcels of land be packaged for high quality and large scale redevelopment? Can this be left to the planning scheme controls and the free market alone (1.6, 3.1 & 4.6)? Does it need other policy interventions such as rate holidays, relief from parking requirements; promotion and sponsorship by developers of car share schemes; as-of-right height limits; an independent public development authority to acquire and parcel land for developers; and so on? This is crucial to the success of the Strategy and needs to be given more thought than has occurred to date. The areas of Sebastopol, Delacombe, Alfredton West and Wendouree (p.40) you have

identified for higher density redevelopment are especially constrained by fragmented land ownership, and are unlikely to deliver the housing and urban design outcomes to meet desirable density and amenity standards unless land parcels can be aggregated for development.

- How do we make a city more resilient to future bushfire risk whilst turning the city into an urban forest? (What type of trees will contribute to our natural assets -exotics or natives, or both? What is most consistent with future water scarcity and with WSUD? Why are tree canopies a better indicator than other types of foliage e.g. green roofs, drought resistant strappy plants in swales, etc? Why 40%? Are there other Australian cities with this level of canopy coverage with similar bushfire risk? How do they fare?)
- How do we actively shift people from their current car dependency? What incentives and disincentives (e.g. costing CBD on-street car parks at commercial floor space returns -thus making viable commercial multi-storey car park construction)? What sort of losses and over how long does the public transport system need to absorb before it becomes comparable in cost to subsidising car use (which we do now without acknowledgement)? In my earlier paper I emphasised the importance of a separate path network for bikes as a pre-requisite for getting women (the gatekeepers on family safety) onto bikes for commuting to everyday destinations. None of the points I raised seem to have been picked up. Reliance on the feeble Ballarat Bike Strategy and on flawed Super Tuesday count data to inform this element of active transport is reckless. The Bike Strategy did not countenance my suggestion in repeated submissions of consideration of lower default speeds for all residential streets, thus eliminating the need for specific bike infrastructure for much of the network. We know that a 30kph network equates to designing for zero fatalities. Alternatively, standardising all Australian road laws to permit bike users to legally ride on footpaths is a way of making life for riders safer, but delivers questionable results for pedestrians. I have no idea what branded route numbers are (4.2.2) -I hope not a sponsored advertising hoarding. *I have already accepted (by email) your invitation to meet and discuss bike issues with you in relation to a future Sustainable Transport Strategy, so will withhold details until that occurs. I await your response.*
- What role is technology likely to play in future with transport? Fleets of fully automated, driverless (and maybe even electric) vehicles could quite conceivably be the successor to Uber, where many people will have their transport needs met by use of a mobile app and credit card, and not need to even be licensed to use a car (as it will require no driver). Such cars would not be able to meet peak demands. But they will be cheaper and safer than today's vehicles, and they will take a sector of the market, with implications for taxi services and off-peak public transport. Access to this type of share service might be an acceptable alternative to the provision of car parking for higher density developments, providing an inducement for developers to avoid the costs of car park provision in high value Growth Activity Centre sites, and also delivering more opportunities to house people rather than vehicles, which is the objective after all.
- How reconcile identification of Warrenheip as a future growth option p.45 with protection of high productivity agricultural land (5.1.5) and protecting water quality (5.2.5 -it sits upstream of Lal Lal Reservoir) without the need for expensive sewerage infrastructure subsidised by existing CHW customers (3.4.1)? The Northern Growth Option presents challenges for supply of sewerage services also, and potentially compromises the existing Ballarat North Waste Water Treatment facility, for which Council has already allowed residential incursion into the buffer zone for the facility. This essential infrastructure should not be compromised, as it represents a substantial community investment.

## **The need to benchmark and set targets**

Section A lists outcomes sought, but does not benchmark where we currently are, and where we are hoping to get to by 2040, with the one exception of tree canopy coverage, from 17% to 40%. Given that the whole Strategy depends on achieving higher densities for dwellings in Growth Activity Centres, it is essential to have some figures on where we are now, and where we need to be by 2040, both for individual Centres and for Ballarat overall. My suspicion is that urban planners seek something like an average of 22 dwellings per hectare on average, to justify the viability of a comprehensive public transport and active transport city, and that Ballarat falls way behind this. What are we building in Ballarat West, and how will developers need to alter their efforts in future? Measure it and you can manage it. This is an approach to the Strategy which would substantially improve and focus it. Where are we now? Where do we want to be in 2040? How do we get from now to then? Add the tree canopy requirement to the mix and what sort of densities are required?

## **Notable omissions from the Preliminary Strategy**

Some notable omissions from the Preliminary Strategy include:

- Consideration of rail freight;
- An added purpose of the Ballarat West Freight Hub being able to protect local roads by restricting B-doubles and triples to major, purpose built (VicRoads/C'wlth funded) roads -effectively being a break-out facility for the distribution locally by smaller vehicles. This could form the basis for a statewide (or even national) approach to managing the road network and reigning in costs for local governments struggling to maintain their local road networks. The MAV or ALGA might be the champions of such change -though driven by BCC and its regional neighbours;
- Discussion of when, how and why the decision to design public transport as a 'spine' network by preference to a grid network was taken (the work of the late Paul Mees represents a lifetime mustering powerful arguments in favour of the latter, over the former). It is worth noting that the Map on p.35 shows poor coverage for the north east quadrant of the city, and little better for the north west (despite it being one of the heavily patronised bus routes at present). This is one of the problems arising from radial/spine designs, which universally fail to service most of the people with frequent and extensive services that offer a realistic alternative to car dependence;
- Justification for future rail stations at Warrenheip and Eureka Stadium, neither of which could withstand the most basic scrutiny from a business or transport perspective. (I can elaborate on both if you wish -but do I need to waste my breath, or will you knock them on the head now?)

## Principles

I didn't pick this up in my 10 questions submission, and hope it is not too late. It involves the notion of providing value for money in infrastructure investment. It could be included as a subset point for either Principle 3 or Principle 5, and read as follows (though with the benefit of being made more succinct by officers, but with the same intent):

***Provide value for money*** Prior to the adoption/endorsement of a preferred public investment of \$10m or more (regardless of which level of government is contributing or underwriting (as in PPPs)), a full benefit/cost analysis be done and made publicly available on the whole-of-life costs of the asset/service and that these be cost-standardised and benchmarked against competing investments as part of a multi-factorial assessment grid that strives to provide the community with a means of readily understanding the relative merits of competing projects, and simultaneously providing a community projects reference which extends beyond the whims of successive councils.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss some of the matters raised and others, to which I have alluded. I feel the Preliminary Strategy provokes responses on a number of issues, which is its purpose. It is my hope that it will result in a visionary strategic document that will establish Ballarat as a resilient, smart and prosperous community in future.

Yours sincerely,

John Barnes.

Encl. Ballarat Strategy Consultation May 2014, Barnes submission