

Introduction to Victoria's Planning System

Objectives of planning

PEA s. 4

The objectives of planning in Victoria are set out in the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (the Act). They are:

- a) to provide for the fair, orderly, economic and sustainable use and development of land;
- b) to provide for the protection of natural and man-made resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity;
- c) to secure a pleasant, efficient and safe working, living and recreational environment for all Victorians and visitors to Victoria;
- d) to conserve and enhance those buildings, areas or other places which are of scientific, aesthetic, architectural or historical interest, or otherwise of special culture value;
- e) to protect public utilities and other assets and enable the orderly provision and coordination of public utilities and other facilities for the benefit of the community;
- f) to facilitate development in accordance with the objectives set out in paragraphs a), b), c), d) and e);
- g) to balance the present and future interests of all Victorians.

The purpose of the Act is to establish a framework for planning the use, development and protection of land in Victoria in the present and long-term interests of all Victorians.

The Act sets out procedures for preparing and amending the *Victoria Planning Provisions* (VPP) and planning schemes, obtaining permits under schemes, settling disputes, enforcing compliance with planning schemes, and other administrative procedures.

PEA s. 4(2)(b)

The Act provides for a single instrument of planning control, the planning scheme, which sets out the way land may be used or developed. The planning scheme is a legal document, prepared and approved under the Act.

Principles of planning schemes

As a result of the planning reform program of the 1990s, a set of principles emerged which underpin the focus and structure of planning schemes. One of the key objectives of the planning reform program was to make planning more strategic and policy based.

The principles are:

Planning schemes have a policy focus

- Planning schemes clearly and concisely express a strategic vision and policy basis.
- There is a logical progression from policy basis and requirements to the exercise of discretion in decision making.

Planning schemes facilitate appropriate development

- Local provisions assist in exercising discretion.
- Discretion must be wide rather than narrow.
- The use of provisions which promote performance is encouraged.

Planning schemes are useable

- The requirements of planning schemes must be clear to users and easily identified from the planning scheme map.
- Statewide provisions apply across Victoria.
- Schemes should minimise site-specific provisions.
- Overlays should identify specific local issues and associated requirements.

Provisions are consistent across the State

- A standard set of provisions to be applied across the State.
- Similar provisions should be used for similar issues.
- The permit is the principal instrument of development approval.
- There can be no local variation to the State-standard provisions.
- Local provisions must not conflict with the State provisions.
- There are only statewide particular use and development provisions.
- Each overlay has a statewide provisions as the 'front end' with local requirements expressed as schedules.
- Overlays may prescribe requirements which apply to development, but planning authorities cannot change the use provisions of the zone affecting the land.

These principles were achieved through the VPP under the *Planning and Environment (Planning Schemes) Act 1996*. The VPP is a template of standard state provisions from which a planning scheme must be constructed.

All Victorian schemes include a Municipal Strategic Statement, local planning policies and a strategically allocated selection of zones and overlays. General administrative provisions and definitions are standard for all schemes. In addition, all planning scheme maps are available digitally. Amendments to the schemes are approved and gazetted, and can be viewed on the Department of Planning and Community Development's website at www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning.

Obtaining a planning scheme

Any planning scheme can be viewed at or purchased from Information Victoria, 505 Little Collins Street, Melbourne 3000, www.information.vic.gov.au, tel 1300 366 356 (local call cost).

Planning schemes are also available on the DPCD website at www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planningschemes

Each council must also keep a copy of its planning scheme available for inspection during office hours, free of charge.

Planning practice notes

The Department has developed a series of planning practice notes and advisory notes to assist users of the system. Some of these have been referred to in this document from time to time as a source of additional information about a specific aspect of the planning system.

These notes can be viewed on the DPCD website at www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning.