Appendix 1 - NORTH Link 2025-26 Victorian Pre-Budget Submission Background Document

Context – Strong Population and Growth with Growing Pains

One in five Melburnians live in Melbourne's North – around one million people. In the 10 years to 2016, the region's population grew by 200,000. Population projections show that by 2036, the region's population will rise to 1.5 million, more than the current population of Adelaide.

Research has shown that historically Melbourne's north has experienced a substantial level of private and public underinvestment in comparison to other metropolitan regions. Attracting new investment and supporting existing businesses to expand and grow delivers substantial benefits to Melbourne's north, and the State more broadly, through a variety of channels.

NORTH Link released in late 2023 the Melbourne's North Regional Investment Strategy, which finds that Melbourne's North is an attractive place for the private sector to invest, but planning certainty and infrastructure support is needed. The report underlines that Melbourne's North has the following features attracting investors:

- Located, on the doorstep of Melbourne's CBD and the gateway to regional Victoria and closest to Sydney and Brisbane by truck and train
- Proximity to Melbourne Airport, Victoria's gateway to the rest of Australia and the world, and Essendon Airport
- Key transport links including Hume Freeway, Metropolitan Ring Road, Calder Freeway, Eastern Freeway and, in the future, the North-East Link and the Outer Metropolitan Ring Road
- A spectrum of world class health services, multiple hospitals, aged care facilities and allied health services supported by a leading collection of medical research facilities
- Significant rail connectivity to metropolitan and regional rail services
- An increased profile in the logistics space, with Somerton and Beveridge Intermodal Freight Terminal investments forthcoming
- Vocational and higher education choices, including La Trobe and RMIT Universities, Melbourne Polytechnic and Kangan Institute
- Greenfield sites or urban development opportunities available at competitive rents
- The potential to share space and collaborate with similar businesses, access to an established network of business services, equipment, and expertise
- Supportive Local Governments and industry organisations
- A vibrant and culturally diverse community fostering a rich social fabric that celebrates inclusivity and creates memorable experiences
- A blend of green spaces and urban hubs that provide recreational areas, promoting health and wellbeing, and reflecting the commitment to a sustainable and liveable region
- A number of investment-ready precincts ready to be developed

However, common themes emerge of investment being held back by:

- Lack of good quality, affordable housing for residents and workers.
- Additional energy, water infrastructure and broadband needs as population and business activity increases.
- Lack of public transport to job hubs, especially on east-west routes; and improved bus connectivity to Melbourne Airport as a major generator of employment while advocating for the Melbourne Airport Rail Link

NORTH Link's *Future Workforce – Melbourne's North 2022-2032* report found:

- Lack of transport options is a major issue for young people seeking work
- Support for employment precincts in the suburbs must include local transport links to increase access to jobs and ensure these precincts grow
- Most significantly, the report found that there are more workers living in Melbourne's North than there are jobs to service the region. For the gap between local jobs and local workers to close, 182,000 more local jobs are needed by 2031.
- By 2036 there will be 908,202 individuals in the prime employment bracket of 15 – 60 years a 31.2% percentage increase in this cohort from 2021
- Manufacturing provides many jobs but automation could lead to job losses without corrective action to boost manufacturing sovereign capability

Submission structure

This submission focuses on:

- Key precincts in Melbourne's North and the Government assistance required to bring them to life
- Transport-specific investment required
- Health-specific investment required
- Education-specific investment required
- Taxation and regulatory reform and attention to energy issues required

Key precincts

1. Northern Innovation and Sustainability Precinct – NISP (formerly La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster - NEIC) – including La Trobe University Redevelopment

The NISP will deliver opportunities in education, health and research innovation.

Investment already underway in the NISP includes:

- La Trobe University's $5 Billion City of the Future with 12,000 new residents and 20,000 jobs.
- $150 million La Trobe University Sports Park.

- $200 million expansion of the La Trobe Hospital by Healthscope.
- New BioNTech facility to deliver groundbreaking mRNA research.
- Victorian Centre for AI in Medical Innovation.
- $1.3 billion redevelopment of Northland with 2300 new residential apartments.
- $180 million expansion of Warringal Private Hospital.
- $300 million upgrade of Austin Hospital.

The NISP is one of only a few nationally significant employment precincts in Melbourne, attracting workers, students, and visitors from across Australia and overseas. It supports almost 40,000 jobs and generates $9.5 billion in economic output per annum, accounting for 1.5% of all jobs and 1.2% of Greater Melbourne's economic output.[1]

The precinct is home to world leading private enterprise and government facilities including:

- La Trobe University
- Austin Hospital
- Warringal Private Hospital
- Heidelberg West Business Park
- Northland Shopping Centre
- Olivia Newton John Cancer Centre
- Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital
- Mercy Health for Women.

The precinct has experienced remarkable growth over the last five years, achieving 12% growth in jobs and contributing 10.2% of economic growth.[2]

The NISP has been identified by the Victorian Government as critical for driving future regional productivity, innovation and employment growth in Melbourne's north.

Billions of dollars of significant investment is already underway in the precinct and the need to masterplan the precinct will enable a planned approach to the development taking place and enable the precinct to reach its full potential.

The under-construction North East Link and current and improvements along the Hurstbridge rail line are highly relevant to this opportunity.

Of the seven innovation clusters in Melbourne, this precinct is the worst connected by public transport. Infrastructure investment, including new transport links through the Suburban Rail Loop, bus priority lanes and pedestrian and cycling links will create local jobs and growth.

There will also be a focus on incorporating the circular economy and renewable energy opportunities.

Despite being backed by a large number of education, health and business Partners/Supporters, the La Trobe NEIC will reach its full potential with support from the Commonwealth/Victorian Governments.

Population is projected to increase 22% by 2041, reaching 773,000 people within a 20-minute catchment. Now is the time to plan for the housing, transport, and job opportunities to support this growth.

a) Partners/Supporters

The NISP is supported by Banyule and Darebin councils, La Trobe University, NORTH Link, Austin Health, Mercy Health, Warringal Hospital, Northland, Melbourne Polytechnic, West Heidelberg Business Park Association and the Northern Councils Alliance.

b) Return on investment

Master planning for the Precinct will unlock public and private investment, jobs and economic activity with support from the Victorian Government working with Councils and industry.

The National Institute of Economic and Industry Research found that should plans for La Trobe University's University City of the Future not proceed, 3,000 construction jobs for each year of the project and 20,000 ongoing jobs would be lost – many of which are high-skilled and high-income – and the Victorian economy would lose up to $4 billion over 10 years.

c) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is calling for:

- The NISP be made a priority precinct
- A Council and industry stakeholder group to be supported to work with the Victorian Government on master planning
- Commonwealth and State Government financial support for progression of the La Trobe University City of the Future expansion
- That the Victorian Government support any application for funds under the Commonwealth Government's Urban Precincts and Partnerships Program to develop a business case for funding to develop the La Trobe NEIC
- Support a transport planning study and delivery of on demand transport services
- Support for sustainable energy generation investment including battery systems to support future energy needs
- Investment in social and key worker housing in the precinct including West Heidelberg and East Preston to support future workforce needs.
- Develop a fast-bus route mimicking the planned Suburban Rail Loop route (SRL), to bring radial benefits to the area well ahead of the planned SRL construction.

2. Beveridge Intermodal Precinct (BIP)

The freight and logistics hub and intermodal terminal proposed for Beveridge is strategically located to maximise Australia's freight network productivity, with trains double-stacked with containers able to arrive at and depart from this facility.

Once operational, freight to and from Victoria's two largest ports – Melbourne and Geelong – will transfer through the terminal using the local links and network upgrades provided by interstate rail, the Hume Freeway and the proposed Outer Metropolitan Ring Road, towards destinations such as Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

BIP will relieve pressure on the current West Melbourne freight terminal and ease congestion, taking thousands of trucks off Victoria's roads by transferring cargo onto double-stacked trains using the Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane inland rail line, set for completion later in the decade.

We support a two-terminal strategy developing both the Western Intermodal Freight Terminal and BIP. They are complementary and, with a projected major increase in freight volumes by 2050 and emissions reductions needed in the transport sector obviating the need for rail, both will be needed.

The BIP project will proceed first.

Supporters of BIP include City of Whittlesea, Mitchell Shire Council, Hume City Council, NORTH Link and the Northern Councils Alliance.

a) Return on investment

Research by the National Intermodal Corporation suggest that the BIFT will create 6,800 direct and up to 20,000 associated jobs.

The project has also been endorsed by the Schott Review into Inland Rail.

The Commonwealth has supported the investment by announcing $750 million worth of funding for the Camerons Lane interchange, which will unlock 20,000 jobs and more than 30,000 homes making it a truly transformational investment for Victoria's fastest growing community.

b) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is calling for:

- Planning certainty from the Victorian Government
- Victorian Government to collaborate with local Councils and industry to this end

3. Epping MAC, including Melbourne (Epping) Market Redevelopment / MFIX

The Epping MAC is an emerging precinct of economic significance hosting significant health, retail, education, manufacturing and logistics assets.

It is located 19 km from the CBD, 16 km from Melbourne Airport and is an emerging commercial and industrial centre in the Whittlesea LGA. The precinct is an important centre with accessibility

throughout the region via rail and road. The MAC comprises approximately 230,300 square metres of commercial floorspace and provides a range of retailing and food and drink premises with a small but growing residential population. It also includes health and education facilities and there are large areas of land available for expansion. It has a major hospital presence in Northern Health and its associated Northern Centre for Health and Education Research, two proposed private hospitals, allied health (DPV Health) and Melbourne Polytechnic Epping campus. Other key job generators are the Melbourne Fruit, Vegetable and Flower Market and Pacific Epping Shopping Centre, the largest shopping centre in Melbourne's north.

Key current and planned investments underway include:

- Pacific Epping, owned jointly by QIC and the Salta Group, is the area's retail hub and has undergone $80m worth of investment in an upgrade to its fresh food core
- Northern Hospital – $162.2 million funded investment in Northern Hospital. The hospital already supports 5,000 staff on site, which will grow with the planned investment. In 2022, it was announced that the Northern Hospital will receive an investment of up to $880 million for a new emergency department with an extra 70 treatment spaces
- Northern Private Hospital - 127 bed private hospital next to Northern Hospital and now operational
- New Epping development- $2 billion mixed use precinct in proximity to Epping MAC includes new residential development, 110,000 m2 of commercial floorspace. New Epping is expected to provide $3.4 billion in economic benefit to Victoria, generating approximately 9,330 jobs during construction and approximately 7,209 jobs at completion
- Melbourne Polytechnic Epping campus
- DPV Health – Epping Health Hub, including $4.1 million to support relocation of Epping Dental Chairs
- Proposed private mental health hospital.

The Epping MAC and its job generators, however, are poorly connected to public transport, with much of the new economic activity and jobs out of walking range of Epping station.

In short, in relation to the Epping MAC, NORTH Link and its Partners/Supporters are calling on the Victorian Government to do the following:

- Support for rail extension to Wollert.
- Exploration of rapid transit links such as Trackless Rapid Transit (TRT) and buses
- State Government support, planning and establishment of a Food Industry Park at the 51-hectare vacant site adjoining the Melbourne Market
- Bus transport links from Epping MAC to industrial and employment precincts
- Energy grid assessment and solution – renewable energy opportunity with battery support and Electric Vehicle infrastructure.

- Government recognition as a key economic and employment precinct and assistance required in investing in projects identified as a part of precinct planning.
- Continued investment to reduce coverage issues relating to mobile and broadband connectivity.
- Improve funding for Primary Health Care as follows:
    - DPV Health Epping Hub - Operational funding to expand service delivery and meet the growing community demand for Aged Care Allied Health, Women's Health, Refugee Health, Homelessness, Early Childhood Services - $1 million
    - DPV Health Epping Hub - Capital funding to support the establishment of a new bulk billing GP Clinic located within the Epping Hub - $800,000

Epping MAC - Wollert Rail

The 2002 Epping North Strategic Plan identified a planned public transport corridor. This influenced the decision of many residents to purchase property in these areas. The integration of a train line was a key feature of this transport corridor. It was to encourage high density development and activity centres around the proposed transport interchanges. Residents now expect the State Government to deliver the Wollert train line to improve the area's liveability, support their housing investment and their livelihoods. Projections demonstrate that Wollert Rail will be well used, with approximately 15,000 daily trips from day one and 40,000 daily trips by 2040.

More recently, the New Epping development which includes over 150 social housing dwellings have begun to welcome new residents and the Northern Private Hospital is now operational, as well as existing investments supporting thousands of jobs, such as Pacific Epping, Northern Health and the Melbourne Wholesale Market. Additionally, Epping has been identified in the State Government's Housing Statement as a priority location for new planning controls to support housing growth. Whilst these are being prepared by the Department of Transport and Planning and Victorian Planning Authority, Epping as a location for high density housing and other investment is contingent on improved transport connections - namely Wollert Rail.

a) Partners/Supporters

City of Whittlesea, Northern Health, New Epping (Riverlee), Pacific Epping, NORTH Link, Northern Councils Alliance and the Epping Wollert Growth Advocacy Group, chaired by the City of Whittlesea and comprised of 15 key industry stakeholders in the Epping Wollert corridor.

b) Return on investment

The population in the Epping North and Wollert growth corridor is projected to increase by 101% by 2041. Wollert Rail will connect this growth corridor to jobs and opportunities in the Melbourne CBD and local precincts such as the Cooper Street employment area, the Northern Hospital, and Pacific Epping. It will remove at least 2,000 cars per hour from heavily congested roads and improve liveability in one of Australia's fastest growing areas.

It will also:

- increase property values by $2.44 billion by 2030
- reduce congestion and generate approximately 500,000 hours and $522.8 million in travel time savings to road users by 2030
- generate two million hours and $1.5 billion in travel savings to rail users each year by 2040; and
- make it easier for staff and visitors to get to the Northern Hospital, which has one of the busiest emergency departments in the state, treating nearly 90,000 patients each year and employing around 3,000 people.

c) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is asking to be engaged with its partners in the development of the Wollert Rail Study and request the findings be made public, as well as seeking a commitment to the expedited delivery of the project and any interim measures to improve transport along this corridor.

Epping MAC - Melbourne Wholesale Market – development of 51 hectares of vacant land (MFIX)

Melbourne's North is fast becoming a world-class food and agricultural hub. With more than 400 large food and beverage manufacturers based in the region, the sector employs 11,000 Victorians and generates $3.7 billion each year.

a) Partners/Supporters

The Melbourne Market Redevelopment is supported by the Melbourne Market Authority, the City of Whittlesea, Northern Councils Alliance and NORTH Link.

b) Return on investment

Already a nationally significant food hub – home to world class agriculture and bioscience research and education facilities – master planning support from government for the Melbourne Market expansion will help cement Melbourne's North as the food and beverage manufacturing capital of Australia.

The National Institute of Economic and Industry Research estimates that the Melbourne Market expansion would create 6,500 ongoing jobs in Victoria by 2027, as well as 3,500 construction jobs and approximately $3 billion of value added to the Victorian economy over a 10-year period.

c) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is calling for the State Government to:

- Work with Councils and industry to activate planning for this opportunity
- Share the findings of the business case studies that DJSIR undertook in 2020 and 2021

- Include key stakeholders including the City of Whittlesea and NORTH Link in current and future scoping and study processes
- Work with industry and local government to identify and prioritise infrastructure needed to activate the site.
- Appoint an industry stakeholder group to input into master planning of the site including the City of Whittlesea and NORTH Link
- Incentivise a major industry player to locate to the Epping site as an anchor tenant to attract other suitable investors.
- Retain a level of control of the adjacent Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market and the adjacent 51 hectares of land via the existing Melbourne Market Authority, which knows the site well, to ensure competitiveness in the food economy is retained and synergies are captured and maintained with the newly developed site.

4. Broadmeadows Revitalisation

Only 16 kilometres from Melbourne with two rail lines, the Tullamarine Freeway, a ring road, and Melbourne's curfew-free international airport all nearby, Broadmeadows has what it takes to be an international economic hub.

Broadmeadows is a place in transition, with a rich history that mirrors the highs and lows of suburban growth across Australia. Built on the proud history of 40,000 years of indigenous culture, it is an area challenged by economic change and disadvantage.

The Broadmeadows Activity Centre (MAC) is approximately 69 hectares in area and accommodates a broad range of land uses that includes Broadmeadows Central shopping centre, Hume City Council civic and community uses, schools, Kangan Institute (TAFE) and other civic, retail and community uses.

Recent investments have included the $25m revitalisation of Broadmeadows Town Hall into a community and function space and the Start North incubator and co-working space.[3]There are several projects underway in Broadmeadows that contribute to breaking down the cycles of disadvantage by creating a more inclusive, connected, and resilient Broadmeadows through strategic investments in infrastructure, housing, and community services:

- **Hume Central, a council-led program to deliver the 'heart' of the precinct by leveraging Council's landholdings in the precinct.** Hume Central is a program of interconnected projects that centres around the transformation of a council car park to become the beating heart of Broadmeadows - a true town centre and destination in one of Melbourne's fastest growing regions, bringing community together to work, learn, play, and enjoy. The program is focused on staying connected to the local community and seeking investment from the private sector. Hume Central aligns with Broadmeadows designation as one of the Victorian State Governments Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC) of focus for increased housing supply. The projects include:

- BROADMEADOWS TOWN SQUARE: The proposal for a new Town Square includes a new community gathering place in the heart of Broadmeadows envisaging a large screen, shade, seating and opportunities for public art and events. This could become reinvigorated community space to accommodate current and future need incorporating learning and community use spaces.
- A HOTEL AND MIXED-USE BUILDING: Council has run a market process to utilise some of its land to seek a partner to build a proposed hotel, which would be located on the corner of Tanderrum Way, and could also include features related to hospitality, office space and possibly some retail. The project has progressed to a Request for Proposal (RFP) process and there is now a Heads of Agreement (HOA) in place for a market sounding process. This process invites companies to submit more information and a detailed proposal of how they would design, develop, and deliver the project.
- BROADMEADOWS TOWN CENTRE CAR PARK: Council Is currently working on draft plans and documentation for the new car park at Hume Central to support the unlocking of car park land for more active uses. If approved, the car park, which would be located on the corner of Pascoe Vale and Camp Road, would be developed in stages to support the gradual activation of land within Hume Central. The incremental car park amenity will service the Hume Central precinct, inclusive of a safe pedestrian friendly connection across Dimboola Rd.

- **Kangan Institute Masterplan** The first stage of Kangan Institute's Broadmeadows campus redevelopment, funded with $60 million in the Victorian Budget 2021/2022, successfully delivered a Health and Community Centre of Excellence. This project was completed on time, on budget, and exceeded all social procurement and Major Project Skills Guarantee targets. In 2023, approval was granted for the Hume Tech School, which is on track to open by Semester 2, 2026.
- To fully realise the masterplan's vision and outcomes, an additional $225 million investment is required for the final stage of the redevelopment. This crucial stage includes constructing a Trades and Skills Centre of Excellence and a Foundations and Pathways Centre. These state-of-the-art facilities will directly address the significant systemic disadvantage in the area by providing accessible, high-quality training aligned with workforce demands in the rapidly growing North-West region. Additionally, the completion of the masterplan will free up approximately 35,000m^2 of land, creating new opportunities to align with government priorities and drive further economic growth.
- Victorian Government's **Broadmeadows Activity Centre Plan** - plan for additional housing. The potential for Broadmeadows MAC to support residential growth, estimated between 3,000 to 4,500 new homes over the next decade. As Broadmeadows experiences planned housing growth, there will be a significant increase in demand for local services, amenities, and infrastructure. This anticipated rise in population will necessitate further investment in

areas such as transport, education, healthcare, and community services, creating a ripple effect of opportunities for private sector involvement. Enhanced housing diversity, coupled with strategic investments, will help solidify Broadmeadows as a thriving and connected community, attracting businesses and stimulating economic development within the MAC.

- **Broadmeadows Train Station redevelopment**- part of SRL North. Broadmeadows remains one of the last Metropolitan Activity Centres in Victoria without an upgraded transit interchange. This results in poor connectivity and accessibility, hindering private investment and economic diversification. Given the likely delay in the Suburban Rail Loop running through Melbourne's North, these projects provide an opportunity to generate economic activity and attract private sector investment in Broadmeadows within a shorter timeframe.
- **Homes Victoria** Banksia Gardens expansion **- 120 new homes -** to be delivered via National Housing Accord - construction commencing soon
- **Banksia Gardens Community Services masterplan** - plan drafted, seeking funding opportunities

These projects contribute to the entire precinct and will address key areas:

Urban Renewal

Leveraging Broadmeadows' strategic location near Melbourne's CBD and transport connections, the Broadmeadows roadmap seeks to enhance the area's urban fabric by introducing high-density developments, improving public amenities, and revitalising infrastructure. Projects like the Hume Central initiative and the expansion of the Kangan Institute are geared towards attracting new businesses, public realm renewal, improving educational facilities, and supporting economic growth.

Housing

There's a significant focus on improving and increasing housing choices through the expansion of social homes at Banksia Gardens and the redevelopment of public and community housing to meet modern standards and increase affordability. This includes creating housing that is culturally appropriate and aligns with current demand.

Community Services and Infrastructure

Improvements to public space and transport infrastructure, particularly the Broadmeadows Train Station, are required to enhance liveability and connectivity. Planned upgrades to health facilities, like the DPV Health Medical & Dental Centre – Broadmeadows, Banksia Gardens Community Service and Kangan Institute are intended to better serve the local population.

Economic and Social Development

The targeted projects will create job opportunities and improve access to essential services. This includes integrating services and infrastructure that foster a vibrant community and economic ecosystem. These projects are designed to encourage social enterprise, support local businesses

and attract new investment, ultimately leading to long-term economic and social benefits for the most vulnerable populations. Implementation of the roadmap will stimulate job creation and economic activity by supporting new and existing businesses and enhancing the area's appeal to both investors and residents.

Sustainability and Resilience

Projects will be designed with sustainability in mind, incorporate green initiatives, renewable energy, and sustainable urban planning to reduce environmental impact and increase the area's resilience to socio-economic and environmental challenges. The Broadmeadows Precinct Roadmap provides an opportunity for precinct scale delivery of sustainable initiatives to underpin a thriving Metropolitan Activity Centre.

Health

Support for vital primary care services.

a) Partners/Supporters

Supporters of the Broadmeadows Revitalisation include Hume City Council, Kangan Institute, DPV Health and NORTH Link

b) Return on investment

To further Broadmeadows' potential as a vibrant place to live, learn and work, these projects if fully funded by the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Program, will create local jobs and have broader community benefits.

The long-promised Broadmeadows Railway Station redevelopment with a walkway to Broadmeadows Central has the potential to trigger job-creating investment.

c) Action sought

To progress this initiative, NORTH Link is calling for the Victorian Government to:

- Commit to Stage 2 of Kangan Broadmeadows Campus Redevelopment, valued at approximately $225 million.
- Commit to a refresh of Broadmeadows Railway Station as soon as possible as a gateway to the Broadmeadows MAC
- Facilitate investment in social and worker housing in proximity to Broadmeadows MAC to support future jobs
- Facilitate investment in east-west transport/ bus routes to better link employment precincts, airport and Broadmeadows MAC
- Support further DPV Health investment stages to support its community and health and expand the DPV Health Broadmeadows Super Clinic as follows:

- Urgent Care Clinic - Operational funding to provide an Urgent Care Clinic to divert community from acute services and address the unmet need for urgent care in the City of Hume southern catchment - $ 1.5 million
- Expanded primary care & community services - Operational funding to expand service delivery Mental Health, Refugee Health, Aged Care Allied Health, Men's Behaviour Change Program and Youth Services - $500,000
- Capital funding to expand footprint by 50%. Updated concept plan in development, to be presented at the December Broadmeadows Revitalization Board Meeting - $20 million

- Support DPV Health in reach services @ Banksia Gardens Estate (Broadmeadows) as follows:
  - Operational funding to provide in reach services within the new Banksia Gardens development including health literacy, service navigation & case management support, Youth Services, Mental Health and AOD services - $500,000
  - Capital funding to fit out new service location within the new residential setting (120 dwellings) - $500,000

5. Coburg, Brunswick, Northcote, Preston, Reservoir and the Inner North

a) Partners/Supporters

Merri-bek City Council, City of Darebin, Melbourne Polytechnic, NORTH Link, Northern Councils Alliance

b) Return on Investment and Action Sought

The Inner North does not need further significant road investment but requires investment and improvement in existing and future public transport links, such as enhancement of the Upfield Line and better east-west bus links.

Coburg activity precinct has great potential to be a major jobs hub for white collar, food and advanced manufacturing, health and the creative industries. It includes two distinct zones: Coburg Activity Centre and Coburg North Industrial Areas at both Newlands Road and northwest of Batman Train Station.

Coburg Activity Centre has recently grown as a result of the major investment in the redevelopment of the former Pentridge Prison site. The Bell and Moreland level crossing removal project has also delivered new stations and open space. However, the centre of Coburg remains underutilised and there are substantial Merri -bek City Council landholdings in the precinct that will support future redevelopment and investment. The Coburg North Newlands Road Industrial Area is home to a growing food cluster including several medium size enterprises. These businesses are supported by purpose built industrial accommodation, which provides them with the space and facilities they need to operate efficiently. There is also a strong and growing number of creative and cultural businesses, supporting over 1,000 creative and cultural sector jobs, in the Coburg Activity Precinct. Overall, there is a potential for $3.6 billion in economic output per annum and 9,876 jobs.

The soon to be developed Coburg Health Precinct will greatly strengthen the precinct's role in Melbourne's north. The new health hub will house an extensive range of health care and social

assistance services, and support over 1,000 new construction and health care jobs and will be complemented by investments in retirement living.

The duplication of the Upfield Rail Line and a link to the Craigieburn Line at Somerton will enable potential workers to better access the expanded precinct from the Outer North and take pressure off the CBD.

The Upfield Rail Corridor has very poor peak frequency, with train services historically running every 20 minutes during peak periods. Our growing community, particularly in the north of Merri-bek, urgently need the duplication and upgrade works to improve train frequency, accessibility, passenger experience and station amenity, which can in turn support job and socio-economic outcomes for Merri-bek and Melbourne's growing northern region.

We welcome and acknowledge that both the Brunswick level crossing removals and completion of the metro tunnel - which will free up slots at North Melbourne that could be allocated to Upfield Line trains - and could enable trains to run faster on the Upfield rail line.

However, the single-track service between Gowrie and Upfield Stations will continue to create significant bottlenecks and constraints for the length of Upfield line – the duplication of this section is key to running more trains more often.

The Inner North economy overall is driven by the following range of businesses: creative industries, incubation and coworking, design digital, health, Bio MedTech, boutique manufacturing, and servicing of Outer North manufacturing and logistics. Historically, there is a strong presence and a high concentration of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO's), as well as many Aboriginal owned and operated businesses.

Brunswick, Alphington, Preston, Thornbury, Northcote, Fairfield and Reservoir are categorised by their eclectic mix of industrial and commercial land. These areas have been identified to be retained for industry and employment uses and are increasingly supporting a range of creative industries including makers spaces, film studios, recording studios and specialist 3D artwork production. A designated 'Brunswick Design District' has been identified centred around RMIT University's Brunswick Campus and is a Partnership between Merri -bek Council, RMIT University and Creative Victoria. This project is a cornerstone to positioning Brunswick and Melbourne's inner north as a nationally significant incubator for creative industries and design.

The social enterprise sector is currently strong in the Inner North and has been elevated further by government social procurement policies.

Significant education assets exist in this region including RMIT Brunswick, Melbourne Polytechnic (Preston, Fairfield, Collingwood and nearby Heidelberg) and the nearby La Trobe University, as well as the BRUDI incubator in Victoria St, Brunswick.

To progress economic development in the Inner North, we recommend:

- Utilise public assets anchoring the Brunswick Design District such as RMIT University Brunswick Campus and Dawson Street Police Complex site (future creative/manufacturing redevelopment potential).
- A commitment to providing a new site for the police to free up Dawson Street, so that its potential in supporting creatives/start ups and the emerging biomed tech scene in Brunswick can be realised

- Feasibility study for the duplication the Upfield rail line and extending it the via the Upfield Somerton link to Roxburgh Park and Craigieburn, which would double Coburg and Brunswick's catchment of workers, students and consumers overnight
- Support the development of commercial office and employment space including for Bio MedTech uses complementary to the Parkville Biomedical Precinct
- Connect Preston to the Northern Innovation and Sustainability Precinct with innovative transport solutions such as rapid bus transit
- Protect live music venues and affordable space for creatives, with a focus on live music venues, musicians, music manufacturing companies and independent labels
- Work to make the contribution of creative industries more visible and elevate the link with the digital and tech sectors
- Collaborate with Reservoir Revitalisation Board and track and monitor outputs
- Progress 'Vibrant Brunswick' Activity Centre Plan for Brunswick
- Central Coburg – fund the significant drainage upgrades that are required as part of bringing this major revitalisation project to fruition
- Key worker housing – a commitment from the State to utilising their land to deliver much need affordable housing targeted at key workers who work in the main employment industries in the north
- Further develop Coburg as an arts precinct – with additional creative and co-working spaces; funding studio spaces for creatives as per the 'making space' program in 2021.
- Improve links to Central Coburg with nearby sub-precincts such as Coburg Health Precinct, Pentridge and Coburg Lake
- Higher capacity, more frequent trains (north -south) and buses (east –west); make use of Bell St arterial road for east-west buses and consider a fast bus route mimicking the Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) to bring radial transport benefits ahead of the planned SRL opening in Melbourne's North.

6. Melbourne Airport

Melbourne Airport is the region's largest employer with key industrial precincts located to its south and east. Melbourne Airport will continue to play an important role in providing for a range of aviation and non-aviation uses, consistent with the 2022 Master Plan. Within the nearly 3,000-hectare airport land area are established precincts, that combined with the Somerton, Tullamarine and Keilor Park Industrial Precinct, form a large cluster of industrial land located adjacent to the airport, that support a range of transport and logistics, wholesale trade and other sectors that require easy access to the airport. This premier logistics and warehousing hub is home to tenants such as DHL, Toll IPEC and TNT Express. Melbourne Airport Business Park provides only leasehold property. Businesses positioned at Melbourne Airport benefit from: the city's largest airfreight terminal, 24/7 curfew free flight operations and highly specialised building options, including advanced data centres for some of the world's largest companies.

Melbourne Airport is one of the primary employment precincts for Melbourne's north-west and directly employs more than 18,000 employees, and indirectly supports a further 146,000 jobs.

NORTH Link and its Partners/Supporters are seeking support for:

- The Melbourne Airport Rail project to ensure future passenger growth can be met by multiple modes of transport.
- Improvements to the airport's public bus links to provide passengers and airport workers with better connections to nearby communities.
- Planned projects including Elevated Roads, Elite Park, and further terminal expansion to support continued growth.
- Support for extra capacity in markets constrained by bilateral air service agreements, and Government support for new international carriers to maintain our competitive edge against other jurisdictions.

We note that the Commonwealth Government recently approved the Major Development Plan for Melbourne Airport's Third Runway. NORTH Link welcomes this development as it will allow for extra capacity, especially from international carriers. A single daily international service delivers on average $154 million in economic activity, supporting 1,380 jobs a year.

7. Manufacturing Precincts in the Outer North

Key manufacturing precincts across the Cities of Hume and Whittlesea (and soon to include Mitchell Shire) employ thousands of people in the manufacturing and supply chain sectors. Logistics is becoming an increasingly important given the region's proximity to Sydney by truck (8-hour drive) and rail (presence of national rail freight network). Current and planned logistics investments include Melbourne Airport, Melbourne Wholesale Market, Amazon (two major investments) and BIP.

These precincts include:

- Campbellfield/Somerton Industrial Precinct
- Thomastown and Epping
- Craigieburn North Industrial Precinct
- Merrifield
- Future Precincts such as Cloverton, Fusion Business Park, Wollert Industrial Precinct and Beveridge

Transport issues are paramount for these precincts with a lack of public transport for residents seeking to get to and from work – east-west bus networks at manufacturing start-times are particularly poor, especially public transport links to industrial estates. The Wallan Rail duplication and Upfield-Somerton Link/Upfield Line duplication are rail key priorities.

Road investment will be required as population increases exponentially out to Wallan, with the possibility of investment in the Hume Freeway and various interchanges to precincts vital, as well as the duplication of former farm roads such as Mickleham Road and Donnybrook Road.

The E6 and Outer Metropolitan Ring Road will also be required and planning should commence now.

Supporting public and private infrastructure requirements will be paramount around a new public hospital in the Outer North, further primary care investment, university/TAFE facilities, water and power upgrades and adequate broadband infrastructure, as well as schools and childcare.

In short, the following is required:

- Expanded capacity of Hume Freeway to support future need
- Feasibility study on Upfield-Somerton Link/Upfield Line duplication and exploration of on-demand transport for industrial estates, particularly for shift workers
- E6/Outer Metropolitan Ring Road planning and investment to link this precinct to the North East Link and the western suburbs in the future
- Plan and deliver Bus Rapid Transit and public bus network expansion for improved workforce access
- Investment in Wallan Rail Electrification including new stations at Cloverton MAC and Beveridge.
- Investment in transport upgrades including east-west road network such as Donnybrook Road, Gunns Gully Road and Beveridge Road.
- Planning for health, education and other social infrastructure to be located at Cloverton MAC, including a new Outer North Hospital, as well as power, water and telecommunications utilities for new suburbs and business precincts. Two key infrastructure items would catalyse development of this future city:

  <u>The Outer North Hospital</u>

  - **Land Acquisition -** $25,000,000 for the acquisition of 10 hectares of land for the future hospital
  - **Feasibility Study** – completion of a feasibility study to determine the future scope of the Outer North Hospital
  - **Construction** – appropriate funding for the construction of the Outer North Hospital

  <u>Cloverton Train Station</u>

  - **Land Acquisition** - $20,000,000 to acquire land for the future Cloverton Station, associated transport hub, and the potential realignment of the ARTC track to enable dual platforms.

- **Construction** – Appropriate funding for the construction of the Cloverton Station and associated infrastructure

- Primary Care
    - DPV Health Craigieburn Hub:
        - Operational funding to expand service delivery at DPV Health's new Craigieburn Hub site: Alcohol & Other Drugs (AOD), Aged Care, Youth Services, Men's Behaviour Change Program - $1,000,000
        - Capital funding to support the fit-out of vacant space within DPV Health's new Craigieburn Hub site - $800,000
    - Child & Family Hubs (Across Hume & Whittlesea)
        - Operational funding to deliver evidence-based, integrated Child & Family Hubs using DPV Health's existing site infrastructure in Epping, Mernda, and Whittlesea. Operational funding will provide the missing 'glue' to connect with families into early development and health and wellbeing services including health literacy, care navigation and peer support - $1,350,000
        - Capital funding to retrofit existing sites for Child & Family Hub services (includes accessible playground areas, therapy rooms) - $750,000

Public and Road Transport – supporting the advocacy of the Northern Councils Alliance in the campaign to Connect Melbourne's North.

Specifically, we are supporting the NCA in seeking:

- Upfield Rail Corridor duplication and upgrade, Clifton Hill Rail Exchange, Wollert Rail Extension, Wallan Rail Electrification, Melbourne Metro 2 and OMR/E6.
- Specifically in relation to Upfield Rail specific asks are as follows:
    - Approximately $4 million for scoping study to plan and map out the duplication of Gowrie to Upfield Line, extension to Craigieburn Line and electrification to Wallan with service provision to Cloverton.
- improve the network of buses that connect the Melbourne's north community to major precincts and health and education facilities, as outlined in the Northern Region Transport Study Stage 2: Bus Networks. This includes but not limited to: improved services to Melbourne Airport and La Trobe University, improved SmartBus access, increased northern growth corridor services and buses replicating the future Suburban Rail Loop route
- Fund the transition to electric vehicles and support for implementation of recommendations resulting from the evidence-based Community Electric Vehicle Transition Plan – particularly financially supporting transition of Council fleet vehicles to electric (particularly heavy fleet), and grid connection and grid stability upgrades for Council depots, offices and community facilities.

- Provide liveability funding for northern trails, specifically a 10-year pipeline of funding (estimated $110 million) to complete all stages of the Northern Trails project, including delivery. Northern Trails 2022 provides a planning framework and action plan to establish a network of integrated and connected shared trails (primarily for walking and cycling) that link communities, destinations and a range of urban and natural environments across the region.
- Bring forward construction of the E6 Freeway to 2027-28 to ensure it is complete by 2032-33 and also accelerate planning for the rest of the Outer Metropolitan Ring Road (OMR) project

Health, Well-Being and Environment

Together with the Northern Councils Alliance, NORTH Link is seeking support for the following:

- Plan for a new public hospital in Melbourne's north to cater for the growing population and increasing health needs in our community, providing emergency care with provision for specialist services such as oncology, maternal, neonatal and paediatric services. Major public hospitals in the north (Northern Hospital and Austin/Mercy) are at capacity, with the Northern Hospital in particular under significant pressure.
- Provide a funding plan for primary care in Melbourne's North, with consideration of planning for population growth in the Outer North
- Provide better support to end family violence in communities across Melbourne's north and increase early intervention to support children and young people's wellbeing, including commitment to improving the service system in each Council area, four years of funding to establish a Northern Councils Violence-Free Team and four years of funding to deliver Gender Equity Action Plans and Gender Impact Assessments.
- Support for a greener north to meet canopy cover and biodiversity targets set within the Plan Melbourne: Northern Metro Land Use Framework Plan. Tree canopy cover in this region is the second lowest of any region in metro Melbourne. Funding of $25 million per annum for four years will support delivery of canopy plans in areas of community vulnerability, tree planting programs and biodiversity actions along waterways.
- Increase funding and services to improve and support mental health and wellbeing, and an increased focus on mental health prevention across the region. This can be achieved by funding Councils to engage in mental wellbeing activities, Council representation on key governance structures and in planning processes, funding for current promotion and prevention work, and to improve availability of local mental healthcare services.

Education and Skills

We are seeking support for the following initiatives:

Centre for Urban Electrification

The establishment of the Centre for Urban Electrification at Melbourne Polytechnic's Heidelberg Campus strategically aligns with the Victorian Government's commitment to revitalising the State Electricity Commission (SEC) and achieving 95% renewable energy by 2035 and net-zero emissions by 2045. Recognising the pivotal role that certain regions in Victoria will play in renewable energy generation, the project focuses on the urban areas, particularly metropolitan Melbourne, for the crucial task of retrofitting and electrifying homes, businesses, and industries. This ambitious initiative positions Melbourne Polytechnic as a leader in urban electrification education and training, pivotal in supporting the state's transition towards cleaner energy solutions and meeting ambitious net-zero targets.

Advanced Manufacturing Centre of Excellence (AMCOE) – next stage

The next stage of growth for the Advanced Manufacturing Centre of Excellence (AMCOE) at Melbourne Polytechnic's Heidelberg Campus holds significant implications for the priorities of Melbourne's north, especially in fostering economic competitiveness and innovation. The decision by Australia to scale back advanced manufacturing training underscores the urgency for regions like Melbourne's north to strategically invest in education and facilities that cater to evolving industry demands. The AMCOE, launched in June 2022, has seen remarkable growth, boasting a 280% surge in student enrolment. This success, predominantly created by positive word-of-mouth, positions AMCOE as pivotal in navigating the educational challenges faced by VET Engineering in Australia. The proposed funding for the upcoming phase of AMCOE aligns seamlessly with the overarching priorities for Melbourne's north. The goal is to create an enlarged and technologically advanced centre catering to various engineering disciplines, such as fabrication and locksmithing.

Kangan Institute – Broadmeadows (Stage 2)

A $60 million investment in stage one of Kangan Institute’s Broadmeadows campus redevelopment will create new training opportunities in Melbourne’s north and provide essential post-COVID economic stimulus.

NORTH Link is seeking an additional $225 million for the final stage of the Broadmeadows Campus Revitalisation, which will establish the Trades and Skills Centre of Excellence and the Foundations and Pathways Centre. These centres will drive job creation and improve employment outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged groups, by providing high-quality TAFE education aligned with industry needs.

The full masterplan will also consolidate operations, freeing up 35,000m^2 of land and enhancing Kangan Institute’s financial sustainability through reduced operating costs, expanded revenue from co-located partners and offerings, and better asset utilization—all while advancing government priorities.

Business Costs, Energy Costs and Regulatory and Taxation Reform

Melbourne's North manufacturing businesses in particular are reporting increased cost and time in complying with increased Commonwealth, State Government and agency regulations. Furthermore, rises in land tax, WorkCover premiums and the Superannuation Guarantee Charge are also taking their toll on the business bottom line, concomitant with increases in costs associated with labour due to skills and labour shortages, as well as energy, insurance, freight, fuel (including levies) and materials.

There needs to be a revived focus on the part of Governments on "taking costs out" to ensure our businesses are more competitive with those in other States and internationally and so that business owner and manager time is spent in a more balanced way.

In terms of energy policy, some local processors use gas as part of the manufacturing production processes, including those in the food processing sector. Gas provides a high level of energy intensity for these production processes and there is industry confusion over the pathway to a replacement fuel. Electricity-based substitutes are costly to implement and operate at this stage, according to key manufacturers. Attention needs to be paid to this issue urgently, so key manufacturing processes are retained onshore in any transition.

A new education program with simple steps is also required to help businesses, especially manufacturers, to look at least cost steps towards energy efficiency with particularly reference to electricity use.