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Retreat from sustainable development for Melbourne

The Metropolitan Transport Forum, representing 19 councils on transport issues, has said the state government's proposed extension of Melbourne's urban growth boundary will exacerbate Melbourne's land use and transport problems.

'While many overseas cities are consolidating, the state government is intent on sprawling further into farming and recreation land, without adequate passenger transport or other facilities,' said MTF Chair Cr Jackie Fristacky.

'It will take decades before realistic services are available for the northern, north western, eastern, and south eastern urban expansion,' she said.

According to Cr Fristacky the plan released yesterday is flawed in key respects, namely:

1. The low target of residential density at an average of 15 dwellings per hectare is a serious retreat from the Melbourne 2030 blueprint for a more compact and sustainable city. An average of 25 was initially targeted for development at Aurora and 40 dwellings per hectare were identified around activity centres and rail stations. Highly sought-after areas in inner Melbourne such as Port Phillip and Yarra are 40 and 60+ dwellings per hectare;
2. The failure to integrate planning for extending the rail line to Epping North, from South Morang to Mernda to Whittlesea and beyond Cranbourne East. The catchments for developments in the north and south east require integration with planning for further rail extensions. This is critical to tackle congestion and ensure a high mode share for public transport in these growth areas.

'Unless average densities far exceed 15 per hectare, further pressures on Melbourne's growth boundary will be inevitable' said Cr Fristacky.

'Melbourne will pay for these low aspirations set out by the Government with reduced liveability, environmental and social costs.

'The MTF urges the Government to plan for real 'smart growth' by committing to sustainable residential density in growth areas supported by integrated public transport services.'

The MTF represents 19 Councils in metropolitan Melbourne.

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