

Quarterly Update

August 2023

Updating members and stakeholders on the work of the Eastern Region Group of Councils

From the ERG

Welcome to the ERG Quarterly Update

This newsletter provides a snapshot of current ERG activities across the region, including the progress of the ERG's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan. Please share this update with interested colleagues and stakeholders.

Advocacy update

State & Federal Members of Parliament

ERG members met with local State and Federal MPs in April and June to discuss challenges faced by local government and explore how we may work together on shared regional priorities.

The ERG presented its [advocacy priorities](#) and called for stronger relationships across all levels of government. Early engagement and stronger local input to decision making is needed to address regional challenges such as:

- Cost of living pressures and housing availability
- Threats to council's roles in planning and building
- The region's high rate of canopy tree loss
- Financial sustainability for councils.

We look forward to continuing these discussions with local members and thank State Member for Bayswater, the Hon. Jackson Taylor MP for his assistance in coordinating the meeting at Parliament House.

Municipal Association of Victoria

With the welcome alignment of the MAV Metropolitan East Region with the eastern region, the ERG met with MAV President, Cr David Clarke, MAV Acting CEO and MAV Metropolitan East Region delegates to discuss recent MAV State Council outcomes and how we can align our efforts better in the future. Congratulations to Cr Stuart James, Monash Council on his recent election to the MAV Board.



CEOs discuss IBAC's Operation Sandon Report and planning reform

Whitehorse CEO Simon McMillan is leading a MAV supported working group looking at a myriad of planning reforms mooted by the State Government. Following the tabling of the IBAC report into Casey Council, the Premier stated: *"It is the clear position of the Government that the role of local councils in significant planning decisions should be reduced"*. Although many of IBAC's 34 recommendations relate to the rezoning of land, implications for councils' statutory planning role are likely - this will be discussed by ERG CEOs at their 4 August meeting.

Strategic Plan 2021/25 update

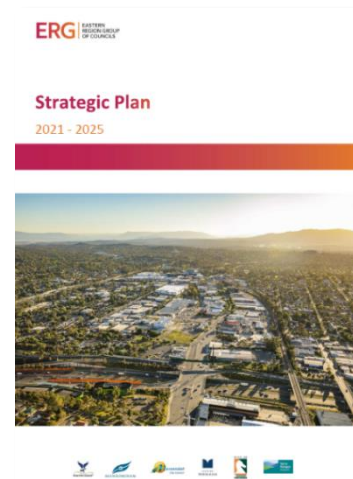
The ERG Strategic Plan provides a shared vision for the region and sets out short & longer-term priorities under four pillars: *Economy, Communities, Environment, and Infrastructure*.

Our mid-term review of implementation identified a stronger focus for us on the financial sustainability of the sector; planning and building reform; procurement; and the future of the east, particularly the high rate of loss of canopy trees and emerging waste streams, as we work to reduce emissions and achieve a circular economy.

Recent activities include:

- Meeting with LGV and MAV to discuss sector priorities and planning reform
- MEREDG - progressing pilot model provisions and streamlining project
- North-east local jobs taskforce - strategy session for the network to update priorities and work plan
- ERG Regional Reconciliation Officers meeting - with Nicole Findlay, CEO Reconciliation Victoria, LGV and DGS reps
- EAHA Preventing Homelessness in Women over 55 - project working group
- MERSRS - input to scope and procurement process for the joint regional Fair Access Policy
- Contributing to the now approved 2022-26 Eastern Metro Volunteer Management Activity Work Plan
- EAGA - annual planning session to agree project and proactive advocacy priorities
- Eastern Metropolitan Partnership - Sam Sondhi, Interim Chair and Thomas Jacobs, Partnership Coordinator
- Together for Equality and Respect - regular meeting with Elly Taylor, CEO, Women's Health East
- ERG Gender Equality Managers and Procurement Managers meetings
- Smart Urban Futures conference - facilitated plenary panel on integrated planning and project delivery
- ANROWS Roundtable Event: Migrant and Refugee Women's Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Study
- OELLEN School to Work Summit

View the ERG's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 at: www.easternregiongroup.org.au/resources



Around the region

Infrastructure & Environment

Building on the Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action's [Energy Savers](#) program, Federal funding opportunities were promoted to local businesses with 26 businesses accessing more than \$500,000 - 70% of Victoria's funding. This will support energy efficiency upgrades to air conditioning and water heating and replace inefficient refrigeration and kitchen equipment for three businesses in Maroondah, nine in Monash, two in Whitehorse and four in Yarra Ranges, as well as businesses in other EAGA council areas.

Communities & Economy

In Melbourne's eastern region, accessing both social and affordable housing is a growing challenge requiring urgent attention. [Eastern Affordable Housing Alliance](#) (EAHA) estimates that the current social and affordable housing shortfall is 9,360 dwellings - meaning an additional 1,170 affordable dwellings are required each year. In the last financial year ERG councils approved 2,627 dwellings and to date, the Big Housing Build has seen 690 dwellings commenced and 136 dwellings completed in our region.

[CBRE estimates](#) that only one-third of the 100,000 apartments needing to be built to meet Melbourne's overall housing demand in the next three years will be built. State Government policy seeks to halt sprawl and achieve 70% of development in established areas, however many medium and high-density developments approved do not progress. This situation will likely worsen - [ASIC](#) data shows 2117 Australian building companies entered liquidation in the last financial year and despite Domestic Building Insurance being a legal requirement, government has had to step in to protect impacted consumers as the cracks in the State's building regulatory environment widen.

The ERG works closely with EAHA and the Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Charter Group and MAV. Addressing homelessness and housing affordability will require increased collaboration, innovation, and sustained effort across all levels of government and must not sacrifice good planning outcomes or leave communities behind.

Health Innovation and Care Economy workshop

A significant project milestone was reached in the Health Innovation and Care Economy project on 14 July as 50 health, education, research and industry professionals came together to explore opportunities to strengthen the sector in Melbourne's east.

The Charrette officially marked the commencement of Stage 2 of the project, with the group testing strategic propositions from the perspectives of stakeholder collaboration, investment attraction, local workforce, and the circular economy.

Stage 2 will see deeper research and engagement undertaken into a few regional priority opportunities.

Stage 1 of the project has involved comprehensive research and stakeholder engagement to establish a clear picture of the region's many strengths, including the significant export value of health care services and medical product manufacturing:

- Health care services is the fourth largest export sub-industry (out of 114) in the region exporting 27% of its production, valued at \$1.2 billion.
- Human pharmaceutical and medicinal product manufacturing is fifth largest, exporting 81% of its production, valued at \$1 billion.
- Both have supply chains in the region that contribute \$866 million and \$312 million of goods and services purchasing flows respectively.



Pictured above: ERG Chair Cr Rob Steane, State Member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region, The Hon. Michael Galea MLC who opened the workshop on behalf of the Minister for Suburban Development, the Hon. Ros Spence. Also in attendance was EMP Board Member Suzanne Phoenix, ERG Deputy Chair Cr Mark Lane and Whitehorse Councillor Cr Prue Cutts.



The project will inform advice to government and outline future project opportunities in the region.

It is being undertaken by the ERG and is funded by the State Government's [Metropolitan Partnerships Development Fund](#). It is expected to be completed by November 2023.

More information on the Health Innovation and Care Economy project can be found at:

www.easternregion.org.au/projects

Upcoming meeting dates

The ERG meets every two months. CEOs meet two weeks prior. Upcoming 2023 ERG meeting dates are:
18 August 20 October 7 December

ERG members 2023

Knox: Cr Marcia Timmer-Leitch, Mayor; Cr Jude Dwight, Deputy Mayor; Bruce Dobson, CEO

Manningham: Cr Deirdre Diamante, Mayor; Cr Tomas Lightbody, Deputy Mayor; Andrew Day, CEO

Maroondah: Cr Rob Steane, Mayor (ERG Chair), Cr Tasa Damante, Deputy Mayor; Steve Kozlowski, CEO

Monash: Cr Tina Samardzija, Mayor; Cr Nicky Luo, Deputy Mayor; Dr Andi Diamond, CEO

Whitehorse: Cr Mark Lane, Mayor (ERG Deputy Chair); Cr Prue Cutts, Deputy Mayor; Simon McMillan, CEO

Yarra Ranges: Cr Jim Child, Mayor; Cr Sophie Todorov, Deputy Mayor; Tammi Rose, CEO

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