

NCA STATEMENT

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Mayors from Melbourne's north call on State election candidates to commit to critical investment

With the Victorian election approaching, the Mayors of Melbourne's 7 northern councils are calling on all political parties and candidates to commit to the infrastructure investment needed to support one of Australia's fastest growing regions.

Representing more than 1 million residents, the Northern Councils Alliance (NCA) comprises the Mayors and CEOs of Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Mitchell, Merri-bek, Nillumbik and Whittlesea. The NCA has identified 7 key priorities requiring urgent government investment as the region prepares to welcome an additional 500,000 residents in coming decades.

"Every election is an opportunity to shape the future of our communities. This election must deliver commitments that match the scale of growth expected in Melbourne's north, which will soon be home to over 1.5 million people," the Mayors said in a joint statement.

"Our current transport and health infrastructure cannot meet existing demand, let alone adequately provide for what lies ahead. It's essential that our infrastructure keeps pace with this growth so our communities can continue to access jobs and essential services."

"Growth brings opportunity, but only if we plan for it," said Lawrie Cox, Mayor of City of Whittlesea and the Chair of the NCA. "Our priority projects are well-defined and, in an election year, we are calling on all parties and candidates to back the projects that will ensure our communities have access to jobs, education and services."

Key priorities for Melbourne's north

- **Upfield to Wallan rail extension:** Extending high-capacity rail from Upfield to Wallan represents one of the shortest, most cost-effective and strategic links that could be built, unlocking equitable access to jobs and services while removing cars from overcrowded roads.

- **Northern bus network transformation:** A total revision of the northern bus network offers the fastest, lowest-cost solution to critical transport gaps. A connected, reliable and high-frequency network is urgently needed to support growth communities, employment hubs and education precincts.
- **Hume Freeway expansion:** Expanding the Hume Freeway protects national freight movement while supporting economic growth along Melbourne's fastest-growing corridor.
- **Outer Metropolitan Ring Road / (E6):** Delivering the OMR/E6 will secure a future-ready transport corridor that protects freight efficiency, unlocks industrial land and reduces congestion across the region.
- **New outer north hospital:** A new hospital is essential to meet rapid population growth and improve health equity. Immediate action, starting with land acquisition at Cloverton, is critical to avoid a long-term healthcare deficit.
- **Northern Trails Network:** The *Northern Trails 2022* plan outlines over 25 connected walking, cycling and riding paths. An investment of \$110 million over 10 years will fix missing links, boost wellbeing and support active transport.
- **Inclusive Employment Program:** A regional rollout will convert population growth into economic participation by connecting local people to local jobs, helping ensure opportunity is shared across the region.

"The decisions made during this election campaign will have an impact on Melbourne's north for decades to come," the Mayors said. "We urge all major parties and local candidates to publicly commit to these priority projects and work with the NCA to deliver the infrastructure needed for a growing region."

The NCA will continue to advocate for these priorities throughout and after the election campaign, working constructively with governments and stakeholders to ensure Melbourne's north receives the investment it needs to support future generations.

This statement forms part of the NCA's ongoing advocacy to ensure Melbourne's north is positioned for sustainable growth. The NCA continues to work constructively with all levels of government and key stakeholders to progress planning, funding and delivery of priority infrastructure.

More information on NCA key priorities is available: www.northerncouncils.org.au.

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Attributable quotes

“These projects aren’t isolated ideas – they are part of a coordinated regional strategy. Responsive investment will deliver strong economic returns while ensuring Melbourne’s north remains a liveable, connected and productive region.”

Cr Lawrie Cox, NCA Chair and Mayor, City of Whittlesea

“Where you live should not determine how easily you can access opportunity. Too many people across our region face daily barriers, missing appointments, travelling long distances for hospital care, and losing valuable time with family and friends. Investing now will ensure our region is equipped for the future.”

Cr John Dougall, NCA Deputy Chair and Mayor, Mitchell Shire Council

“Our current transport system is already under strain and will not meet the needs of a growing population. From stronger job connections and reliable bus services to rail extensions that keep up with demand, Melbourne’s north needs a transport network that works as one – and works for everyone.”

Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor, Merri-bek City Council

“By working collaboratively, across Councils and in partnership with state and federal governments, we can deliver regionally significant projects that generate jobs and improve quality of life for today’s residents and those yet to come.”

Cr Alison Champion, Mayor, Banyule City Council

“Walking and cycling infrastructure plays a vital role in healthier communities and a stronger economy. To realise these benefits, we need safe, continuous paths to better connect our region.”

Cr Naomi Joiner, Mayor, Nillumbik Shire Council

“When transport services operate individually, the entire system becomes less effective, forcing more people onto already congested roads. Better coordination between buses, trains and other services would allow people to travel efficiently and with confidence.”

Cr Emily Dimitriadis, Mayor, City of Darebin

“Our growing communities need improved access to healthcare, including specialist services that only a major public hospital can provide. The need is clear. The land is available. What’s required now is a firm government commitment.”

Cr Carly Moore, Mayor, Hume City Council

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