

## Partners in planning - principles to involve the community in road planning

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### Abstract:

The paper examines the approaches being adopted by Roads Corporation Victoria to move towards a partnership between the providers and managers of transport infrastructure and the users or clients. It focuses on the weaknesses, rather than the strengths of the current approach to community consultation in the planning process and suggests principles which agencies can adopt to genuinely involve the community in planning.

The paper draws on some recent planning investigations to discuss the principles and indicate how they could be put into effect by public agencies.

It concludes that a process where the community and stakeholders are genuine participants - from defining and owning the problem to shaping the outcome - has a good chance of meeting the real needs of the planning agency, the stakeholders and the community.

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## **Introduction**

One of the major challenges for a road authority in the 1990s is to cater for a public that is on the one hand demanding a high degree of sensitivity to environmental issues and on the other the provision of an improved infrastructure - a challenge set against a background of a growing population, increasing car ownership and travel demand and an increasingly more stringent economic climate.

Ideally the process of planning for transport infrastructure (the transport network and its management) would be developed by a partnership between the providers and managers of the infrastructure and the users or clients - within the context of Government policy, land use objectives and the overall social and economic well-being of the community.

This paper examines the approaches being adopted by Roads Corporation Victoria (VIC ROADS) to move toward such a partnership in planning in metropolitan Melbourne. (Figure 1). It focuses on the weaknesses rather than the strengths of VIC ROADS' current approach to community consultation in the planning process.

It suggests how transport planning agencies like VIC ROADS can use some of the principles for managing public disputes proposed by Carpenter and Kennedy (1988) as a way to handle conflict and reach agreement. The principles apply to the planning processes that are used from the very earliest stages of planning up to and including the preparation of environmental effects or impact statements. While it is recognised that the final decision about a proposal that requires an EES is a political one it is nevertheless the responsibility of the proponent to develop a planning process that addresses the real interests of all stakeholders and results in outcomes with strong community support rather than entrenched opposition. A process like the one suggested aims to achieve this support by involving the stakeholders in the process, not by "selling" the project to them.

A true partnership may not be possible - individuals have widely different value systems and priorities, while transport proposals generally have markedly different effects (both benefits and costs) on different groups and geographic areas.

Participative processes, however adequate, are not a substitute for decision making or for a thorough assessment of the social impacts of transport proposals. Difficult decisions will still be required - those decisions, however, will be made in a climate of greater understanding and ownership of the problem, process and solution.

## **Context**

Victoria will have 5 million people by the turn of the century, about 3.3 million of them living in Melbourne.

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In the metropolitan area, households are forecast to decrease in average size and increase in number by almost 220,000 by the year 2000. Only 42 per cent of the population now lives within 15 kilometres of the centre of Melbourne.

Motor vehicle ownership is also increasing. The Bureau of Transport and Communications Economics forecasts that ownership will reach about 590 cars for every 1000 people by the year 2000, compared with 470 in 1985.

These trends are contributing to the growth of motor vehicle kilometres of travel, which is increasing steadily at around 4% per year. This is much faster than growth rates in either the economy (around 3%) or the population (around 1%), and there is little sign of travel demand decreasing.

While the number of cars per head of population must reach saturation, increased leisure time and market forces and planning actions that allow further dispersion of jobs and residences will lead to increased travel. The perceived lack of reliability, security and frequency of existing public transport services also works against reducing private vehicle travel in metropolitan Melbourne.

Freight travel is growing at around 7% per year (in tonne kilometre terms) due to increasing dispersion of industry and size of markets, specialisation of manufacturing activities and growth of just-in-time inventory control.

At the same time, community concern about motor vehicle noise (particularly from trucks) and pollution, road trauma and the impact of road construction on the environment has increased. Longer term concerns focus on the greenhouse effect, the cost of imported fuel and the availability of fossil fuels.

The condition of Australia's economy coupled with the increased emphasis on social progress lessens the ability of Governments to finance infrastructure programs for both maintenance and system improvements.

### **Strategy for Melbourne's road system**

The development of Victoria's road programs takes into account government and corporate strategies, community input, economic benefits and costs, and demand trends.

The framework is set by the strategic studies -

- \* Metropolitan Arterial Road Access Strategy (METRAS)(MoI 1987)
- \* National Road Strategy (NATROV)(RCA 1987)
- \* Rural Arterial Road Strategy (VICROADS 2000)(RCV 1990a)
- \* Central Area Transport Strategy (CATS)(RCV 1990b)
- \* Metropolitan Public Transport Industry Plan (MetPlan)(MIA 1988)
- \* State Transport Authority Plan (STAP)(STA 1988).

A further study, "Traffic in Melbourne", is underway with the aim of providing a strategic framework to address the demand for and management of Melbourne's traffic to the year 2000 and beyond. It is being undertaken in an

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integrated transport context to support the Government's Metropolitan development policy and social, environmental and economic objectives and is scheduled for completion in late 1991.

Melbourne's transport demands depend greatly on the shape and population density of urban Melbourne, in particular the increasingly dispersed residential and employment locations, the decreasing role of the central area in terms of employment and the declining number of residents in inner suburbs. Transport planners do not have the luxury of starting with a clean sheet - substantial investment in land development limits the opportunity for major changes to the way Melbourne's people satisfy their transport needs.

Melbourne's planning and transport policies aim to modify the growth in private vehicle travel by such means as:

- \* stronger urban consolidation policies to increase residential densities,
- \* the encouragement of District Centres as employment centres with a wide range of services, served by good public transport and car access,
- \* improved public transport services,
- \* demand management measures to encourage a shift from private car to public transport, particularly for Central Activities District and inner area radial trips.

VIC ROADS is therefore taking an integrated approach to the community's transport needs - no longer can a road authority consider its response to those needs in isolation from public transport services and land use planning.

This is most apparent in the Central Area Transport Strategy (CATS) which proposes improvements to public transport services and facilities, restrictions on the supply of long-term parking, a levy on commuter parking, and the management of the arterial road network to minimise through traffic by the development of bypass routes.

In terms of improvements to the road network, VIC ROADS' metropolitan planning is based on the METRAS, NATROV and CATS strategies, in particular:

- \* maximising the safety and operating efficiency of the existing road system,
- \* upgrading (to 4 or 6 lanes) heavily trafficked two lane roads in developing outer suburban areas,
- \* supporting planning and economic initiatives including,
  - the completion of a limited network of strategically-located, high-standard roads based on supporting manufacturing industry by facilitating freight movement,
  - encouraging through traffic around rather than through the Central Activities District,
  - upgrading of road networks in growth corridors.

VIC ROADS is supporting actions which encourage quieter, less polluting travel to reduce the adverse effects of vehicle operations - for example requiring

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lower vehicle speeds at night (60 kph) to reduce noise on a section of the South Eastern Arterial.

VIC ROADS also gives a high priority to measures which will reduce road trauma - through enforcement and education as well as road improvements.

### **Shifts in Emphasis**

VIC ROADS' highest priority is meeting its customers' needs. Its orientation is changing from proposing and providing services (building roads, controlling registrations and licences, administering enforcement and managing the road network) to working with its clients to find out what problems need to be addressed and how VIC ROADS in partnership with its customers can fashion solutions to these problems. To do this VIC ROADS must build up an increased understanding of both local and wider issues and the impacts of choices.

VIC ROADS has a wide range of clients - including the disabled, users of various modes of public transport, pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, truck operators, tourists and the traffic impacted community in addition to people who drive on the roads. VIC ROADS' emphasis in meeting the needs of these clients is directly reflected in its 1989 restructure of the road programs to focus on outputs and outcomes. (RCV 1989e).

This shift in emphasis has come about through a number of factors, most notably a change in community values and a demand that people have a greater say in actions which impact on their environment, coupled with a change in organisational culture to reflect the external environment.

VIC ROADS' programs and planning studies address not only client and community needs but also peoples' concerns about environmental and social issues (RCV 1990c).

The merger in July 1989 of the Road Construction Authority and the Road Traffic Authority into a single road agency, the Roads Corporation Victoria (VIC ROADS), is providing increased opportunities to address access and mobility issues rather than focusing solely on either road construction or traffic management. Financial constraints have also played a part in ensuring that solutions proposed are tailored to meet current needs and low-cost options are given greater consideration.

At the local level people are expressing concerns about traffic noise, vehicle emissions and effects on flora and fauna. At the wider level concerns include greenhouse gasses, the depletion of the ozone layer, shift of freight from rail to road, increase in private vehicle usage, road trauma, possible fuel shortages and the effect of imported fuel on Australia's overseas debt position.

Groups sharing these concerns have formed coalitions and are actively participating in planning processes for major road projects, the Olympic Games bid, the Very Fast Train and proposals for the development of Melbourne's Docklands.

The Government's Social Justice strategy commits agencies such as VIC ROADS to expand opportunities for genuine participation in the planning process.

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In response to this strategy VIC ROADS aims to involve the community at all phases of its activities from policy formulation through to operation and maintenance of the transport infrastructure, particularly in the identification of problems and the formulation of solutions.

### **Achieving partnership**

VIC ROADS, and its predecessor agencies, have placed considerable emphasis on public consultation processes at both the strategic and local levels.

A greater awareness of, and sensitivity to, community issues and values by all staff is actively encouraged and supported within VIC ROADS and more time, effort and skilled staff resources are being allocated to involving the community in VIC ROADS' activities.

VIC ROADS has been acknowledged, even by some of those strongly opposed to some of its proposals, as having a genuine commitment to improved public consultation processes. VIC ROADS has funded community groups, engaged with the community in joint consultant studies, appointed community Liaison Officers and held seminars to encourage dialogue between VIC ROADS, government agencies, professionals and the community on issues such as traffic calming and mediation processes.

In continuing to review and improve its approach to working with the community, VIC ROADS is developing a better understanding of community development and community involvement processes.

### **Community Development**

The communities with whom VIC ROADS works include the general public, organised groups, municipal bodies, people with common interests, neighbourhood groups and individuals. For any project different communities and coalitions of communities may be involved. In a major road project for example many members of the public will be potential users, organised specific interest groups such as residents' action groups or Chambers of Commerce will have interests, municipalities will be affected, there will be people who stand to gain or lose amenity as a result of the project and existing neighbourhoods will be affected.

These communities are often not well resourced to participate in the planning process. Some are diverse and have few common interests other than the project itself. Others may have well developed social and friendship networks but have not developed a participatory culture so that their community development processes lag behind timetables for the project. Communities may be only

beginning to come to grips with the issues, the data and the impacts of a project at a time when the proponent has become locked into decisions.

The difficulties of identifying the various points of view are obvious. Attempting to identify a common community position is generally a futile exercise even when the effects are fairly localised, let alone when those who benefit or are adversely affected are spread widely through the community. The broader community generally expects governments to provide satisfactory services without being greatly interested in how this is achieved - at least until services deteriorate.

It is easy to mistake the view of one community for another. A council view, because it must take into account the municipality as a whole, may not always coincide with the views of affected neighbourhoods or residents' action groups and the proponent may only become aware of these differences very late in the development of the project.

There can be enormous differences in power amongst the different communities depending on how they function, their use of political processes, their access to information, their credibility, their access to the media and their ability to facilitate or disrupt the planning processes.

The challenge for VIC ROADS is to develop its ability to work effectively with these communities to maximise their participation in the planning process.

This will include recognising and identifying the different communities that have a stake in the planning process, developing appropriate community involvement processes, recognising and addressing different perspectives, judgements and concerns from different communities and redressing power imbalances.

Most important however is an understanding of how communities function and a commitment to work with communities to assist them to develop the skills to participate in the planning process.

VIC ROADS has taken a number of steps to achieve this. It has established Road Safety Community Councils in both urban and rural communities. The aim of these councils is to co-ordinate road safety programs which operate within a community context, promote road safety and generate road safety campaigns and programs which harness community expertise.

In addition three Pedestrian Advocates have been appointed to work with communities, municipalities and VIC ROADS' metropolitan regions. These officers will provide locally-based behavioural programs and integrate and develop local resources and services for pedestrians, and will advocate on behalf of specific pedestrian groups in the local area.

Community Liaison Officers are part of the teams for major road planning projects and for major traffic studies. Major construction project teams also include full time Community Liaison Officers. On the Broadmeadows section of the Western Ring Road project for example, the Community Liaison Officer has organised programs for school children, looked at how project management can respond to individual needs, and arranged information days.

VIC ROADS is currently investigating training programs to increase general staff awareness of the principles and practice of community development.

## Community Involvement

VIC ROADS' appointment of officers to work with the community must go hand in hand with an understanding of who will be involved and how they will be involved.

### Identifying the participants

Problems arise where all parties who have an interest in an issue have not been involved. Different parties will want to be involved at different times and in different ways in the planning process, and new parties may emerge during the process. In the Western Bypass proposal (RCV 1989b), for example, local and district health councils became involved as it became obvious that health would be an important issue. This led to a detailed consultant study of health issues jointly managed by VIC ROADS and community groups (RCV 1989c). Many of the parties to be involved will be obvious by the nature of the planning task, others will become apparent by the formation of coalitions supporting or opposing a project, for example the Pro Eastern Corridor Road Action Committee and the Koonung Mullum Forestway Association formed, in support of and in opposition to the Eastern Arterial extension (RCA 1987b). Some parties may be identified by keeping a watch on letters and articles in local papers. Publications and information sheets about a project can begin to establish mailing lists by including an invitation for interested parties to contact the study team.

It is particularly important to provide opportunities for involving people who may not always be identified in the planning process or who may need special assistance to become involved. This will include, in particular, people identified in Victoria's Social Justice Strategy, for example people who speak English as a second language, older people and people with disabilities.

VIC ROADS regularly translates information brochures into the main community languages of an area affected by a project. It is now also translating questionnaires into these languages and providing interpreters at meetings. However, it is difficult to achieve a high level of response. For example the Western Bypass team worked with a local Catholic Institute that was experienced in working with people from a number of ethnic backgrounds, but still the number of people who attended meetings arranged at times and places to suit their activities was low. This could reflect lack of interest or concern about the project or inadequate communication processes. This highlights the need for a greater understanding of how VIC ROADS can work with migrant communities to provide the best opportunities for them to participate. The Traffic in Melbourne Study will work closely with the Commission for Ethnic Affairs to plan how it can best involve people who speak English as a second language.

Designing the process

Carpenter and Kennedy (1988) describe four common approaches to managing conflict - avoiding the issue, leaping immediately into an adversarial approach, finding a quick fix to the problem and the Solomon Trap. The Solomon Trap is quoted in detail as it will be familiar to many managers and planners.

*The person responsible for making a decision about a controversial program conscientiously seeks to identify all affected parties and, through a variety of mechanisms, asks them for their views. A series of well-publicised public meetings is held, key individuals are identified and asked for interviews, and written comments are solicited. The responsible organisation contributes research on the history of the issue and offers its own comments - consistent, of course, with the organisation's mission and current priorities.*

*During the second phase of this strategy, the official sifts through all the comments that have been received, weighs the trade-offs, gives due consideration to questions of fairness, and crafts a solution that comes closest to addressing everyone's interests and that is in harmony with the agency's goals and priorities.*

*The third phase begins when the official announces the decision to the parties, who are dismayed to discover that their key issues have not been addressed exactly as they wanted them to be. During phase one, each group had carefully educated the manager about solutions it thought should be included in the decision. "He seemed so sympathetic to our concerns when we talked to him. What happened?" Parties' disappointments turn into feelings of betrayal. "The agency must not have been listening to us or they would have understood how important our suggestions were." The entire decision is considered unacceptable, and they prepare to oppose it. They lash out at the official, attacking the decision as irrational and irresponsible. He or she is partly consoled by the thought, "Well that's what I'm paid to do - make tough decisions and then catch the flak. After all you can't please everyone."*

*The final phase of this strategy involves the decision maker spending an inordinate amount of time defending the virtues of the proposal to each of the concerned parties. The time spent explaining the rationale delays implementation of the proposal, and it becomes more unlikely that it will ever be implemented. By this point, the parties may become so frustrated and angry with the decision that they will not support it no matter what accommodations are made, and the only satisfactory action is to throw the decision out and begin from scratch to develop a new one. The decision offered to the parties may have been a reasonable solution, but because they did not understand the process, the parties now demand active involvement in the decision making.*

The Solomon Trap exemplifies two problems VIC ROADS faces in its planning processes.

The first is how to communicate with those directly affected. Most staff are able to communicate technical details well but fewer have experience in developing good communications and relationships with the community and affected people.

The second is how to develop an understanding of consultation and participation processes by both VIC ROADS and the community. Many of the staff involved in a major planning project and many of the community affected will not have been involved in similar processes before.

Carpenter and Kennedy offer a number of principles for designing conflict management processes which apply equally well to planning processes. Consideration of these principles will assist in designing planning processes in partnership with the community. The discussion illustrates how VIC ROADS has applied or attempted to apply each principle.

*Principle 1. Conflicts are a Mix of Procedures, Relationships and Substance.*

As much attention must be given to human relationships and the procedures people use to work out their disagreements as to finding technical solutions to the substantive problems at issue.

On one project for example, a deadlock arose over the positioning of sound fences. To resolve the issue a third party was able to assist with the co-operation of both the project manager and the residents involved. The process involved clarifying the problem, getting agreement about significant issues, and more importantly, reaching an understanding about why and where communications between the parties had broken down in the past. Once past understandings had been clarified and good relationships between the parties established the deadlock was broken. Agreements could then be reached between the parties and included how they would communicate in future as well as technical solutions to the problem.

*Principle 2. To Find a Good Solution you Have to Understand the Problem*

Time invested in understanding the problem pays off and avoid traps caused by not understanding the substance of the problem or the dynamics of the controversy. Understanding the problem must be a joint effort between the community and the body charged with implementing solutions. Ownership of the problem by all parties can lead to a real investment in developing solutions.

In the North Fitzroy study (RCV 1989d) issues and problems were identified through surveys and local meetings and their accuracy and relevance were tested through neighbourhood displays, before any options were even considered.

*Principle 3. Take Time to Plan a Strategy and Follow it Through*

A strategy should pay careful attention to:

- \* finding a common definition of the problems;
- \* determining mutually satisfactory procedures;
- \* identifying the issues and interests of the people involved;
- \* developing a range of options for solving the problems;
- \* agreeing on solutions, and
- \* deciding how the solutions will be implemented

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Often when agencies are planning major projects the community is involved only when options have been developed. At this stage the problems have already been identified but the community may not define the problems in the same way or may perceived them differently. Procedures for the planning process that have been agreed to by the major players, for example municipalities and State agencies, are often imposed on the community. The issues and the interests of the parties are often assumed and not clearly identified. The community responds negatively when presented with a range of options (usually including a do-nothing or no-build option) for a problem they do not identify with and which addresses issues and interests that are not their own.

On the Western Bypass proposal procedures for dealing with the health aspects of the project have been developed along with representatives of the community in an attempt to respond to community demand. The Health Feasibility Study Team includes community representatives and has attempted to develop a common understanding of the health problems and of the issues and interests of the parties involved.

A similar situation occurred in the South Eastern Arterial Noise Review Committee (1989) where a noise consultant was engaged to provide independent advice to the Committee. The Committee, which included representatives from Councils, the South Eastern Arterial Noise Action Group (SEANAG) and the Road Construction Authority, developed the noise brief, selected the consultant and worked through the noise issues on the basis of a shared understanding.

In both the Western Ring Road (RCV 1989a, Evans 1990) and Western Bypass studies, options were refined or redeveloped following community response to the options presented. However in projects like the Western Bypass which have a long history (over 15 years) the need for the project is often taken for granted and not re-assessed with the local community or the road users. Well into the planning process for the Western Bypass it became apparent that global issues like the greenhouse effect and statewide issues such as whether more freight should be hauled by rail were major issues for some in the community.

### *Principle 4. Progress Demands Positive Working Relationships.*

While technical information is important equal attention must be given to human relationships. When relationships have broken down even useful and accurate information is received with distrust and is not accepted.

The person responsible for managing the planning process must oversee the whole planning strategy to ensure that relationships between the planners and all parties remain cordial, constructive and positive.

It is all too easy for planners to develop a fortress mentality and to stereotype those who are questioning their planning. Planners and the people who will have to live with the results of the planning process can get locked into positions very quickly and lose sight of the issues. Communication breaks down and conflict develops.

VIC ROADS is involved in planning at a number of levels. Strategic or metropolitan wide planning will involve people with interests in land use planning, the movement of people and goods, the impacts of traffic (both globally and regionally) on air quality, amenity and the environment as well as groups with

specific interests like urban planning, conservation, public transport, bicycle use and health. Planning for major projects may involve all these interests but will also involve local groups like residents' associations and local conservation groups, people who live and work in the affected area and who travel through it and people who will be materially affected by the project. A number of the interest groups are coalescing and working together to develop a coordinated approach to transport planning, and to prepare submissions to VIC ROADS' major planning studies. These groups at times also act as advisers or advocates for individuals and communities affected by major projects.

VIC ROADS recognises the importance of establishing and maintaining positive working relationships and establishes steering committees, liaison committees or working groups for many of its planning projects. Whilst these groups provide a good forum for the exchange of ideas and information at all stages of planning they are often restricted to an "inner circle" of people from State and local government and other authorities and exclude people from community interest groups. Opportunities are provided for some input from these wider community interests through ad hoc meetings and discussions but rarely are they included at the Steering Group level partly because councils generally consider that they best represent the local community.

In the North Fitzroy Study VIC ROADS staff attended fortnightly community meetings organised and managed by residents. This improved credibility, broke down barriers and provided the community with an opportunity to have direct and meaningful input into all stages of the study. It also exposed the VIC ROADS planners to the differing views of the community.

To encourage debate on wider issues outside of its planning processes, VIC ROADS holds seminars and conferences inviting people from the major community organisations to contribute to the debate. Panellists and guest speakers at the 1990 VIC ROADS Management Conference included representatives of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Australian Railways Union, Public Transport Users Association, National Trust, Victorian Farmers Federation, Friends of the Earth and Calder Highway Improvement Committee. The rapport developed in these forums assists in the development of positive working relationships when the people concerned are also involved in the planning process.

*Principle 5. Negotiations (and Planning) Begin with a Constructive Definition of the Problem.*

If at all possible, the people involved should agree on what the problem is before they start. The problems associated with bringing the community into the planning process after the problems have been defined have already been discussed. Major road proposals like the Eastern Arterial Extension, Western Ring Road and Western Bypass have been developed in accordance with the 1987 METRAS and NATROV studies which identified the need for these road connections. Based on these 1987 studies, the study teams at the project planning stage tended to assume that there was community agreement on the need for the road connection and that a route with the least adverse environmental and social impacts should be selected to meet these needs. Hence the first involvement of the community in the planning process is often at the stage of developing options. Study teams need to ensure, to

the extent possible, that the community understands and agrees on the problems at the time the study commences.

The VICROADS 2000 study, in developing a strategy for rural arterial roads, held workshops specifically designed to identify the problems and issues in rural Victoria. Local people had concerns about access to outlying farms, road safety, freight transport, tourism and the environment and worked together to understand their particular regional road problems. VIC ROADS' rural regions went back to the community during the study to confirm whether the problems identified were current and relevant to the development of strategies and options.

The planning process for the Traffic in Melbourne Study is still in its early stages; one of the first steps in the study is to involve representatives of key organisations and the wider community in defining what problems there are in moving people and goods around metropolitan Melbourne.

*Principle 6. Participant Parties Should Help Design the Process and Solution*

Whilst the proponent or the Government has the final responsibility for finding a solution, if the responsibility is shared with the community and the community has a personal stake in the method of making the decision, the final decision is more likely to meet the needs of all parties and is less likely to be rejected.

At the strategic level, for example planning covering the whole of metropolitan Melbourne, it is not a simple matter to involve the community in designing the process as community interests are so diverse. However terms of reference can be made available and public comment sought, then redrafted to reflect that comment as was done for the 1989-90 Review of the Eastern Arterial Extension and Ringwood Bypass (Review Panel, 1989 and 1990). Steering committees or working parties that are involved in designing the process can be constituted to include representatives of at least the major interest groups in the community, for example the RACV, Public Transport Users Association, freight industry associations, Conservation Council of Victoria and others.

Where Environment Effects Statements are required consideration needs to be given to appointing an independent panel at the outset of the investigation rather than after submissions to the EES are made. The panel could then play a significant role in scoping the investigation, facilitating consultation and ensuring the independence of relevant data inputs.

Greater consideration needs to be given to alternative dispute resolution processes where major road proposals are included among the options. The Powerline Review Panel (1989), which was set up to assist in resolution of the Brunswick-Richmond powerline dispute, suggested that Victoria's Commissioner for the Environment examine mediation and other alternative dispute resolution techniques.

At the project planning level and for local area traffic studies it is easier to get effective community input into both the process and the solution than at the strategic level. Where the project is tied to a particular location and the area that will be most affected is reasonably small, people with interests can be identified and involved in the process more easily. Participants can share in designing the process and can assume greater responsibility for components of the process; for example the planning and running of local meetings; designing and implementing exchange

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of information between the proponent and the community; identifying those who could participate in the process; raising issues to be addressed; generating options and developing criteria to evaluate options.

Approaches like this go a lot further to truly involving the community in the planning process than the traditional approach of a steering committee comprising government and local government members, a series of information bulletins, and a round of public meetings which result in a series of options for the community to accept or reject.

In VIC ROADS' North Fitzroy Study, the study team set out to involve local residents in the formulation of a strategy. A representative of the residents' action group NoFASTS which was formed at the beginning of the study attended liaison committee meetings when VIC ROADS staff met fortnightly with residents. VIC ROADS provided assistance to NoFASTS so that the residents could prepare information brochures, hold meetings in the community and develop solutions. NoFASTS also helped direct VIC ROADS on what options they should consider.

*Principle 7. Solutions are Based on Interests not Positions*

A process that focuses on interests is likely to be successful because talking about what people really need makes sense to them.

Once groups that take particular stands or positions form, people can become locked into these positions and lose sight of their interests. Their interests may be different but are often not mutually exclusive.

The planning process should encourage parties to talk with each other about their interests to begin to develop solutions that meet these interests.

**Conclusion**

Situations where public agencies define the problem in their own terms, become the scheme proponent, control the consultation process, provide most of the technical advice, and even become the decision-maker or provide much of the advice to the decision-maker are recipes for disaster.

Conversely a planning process which is based on the principles outlined above will assist in dealing with the contentious issues that are faced by all public agencies. A process where the community and stakeholders are genuine participants - from defining and owning the problem to shaping the outcome - has a good chance of meeting the real needs of the planning agency, the stakeholders and the community.

Each planning study is unique and requires the allocation of time, resources and expertise to ensure that its planning processes incorporate these principles.

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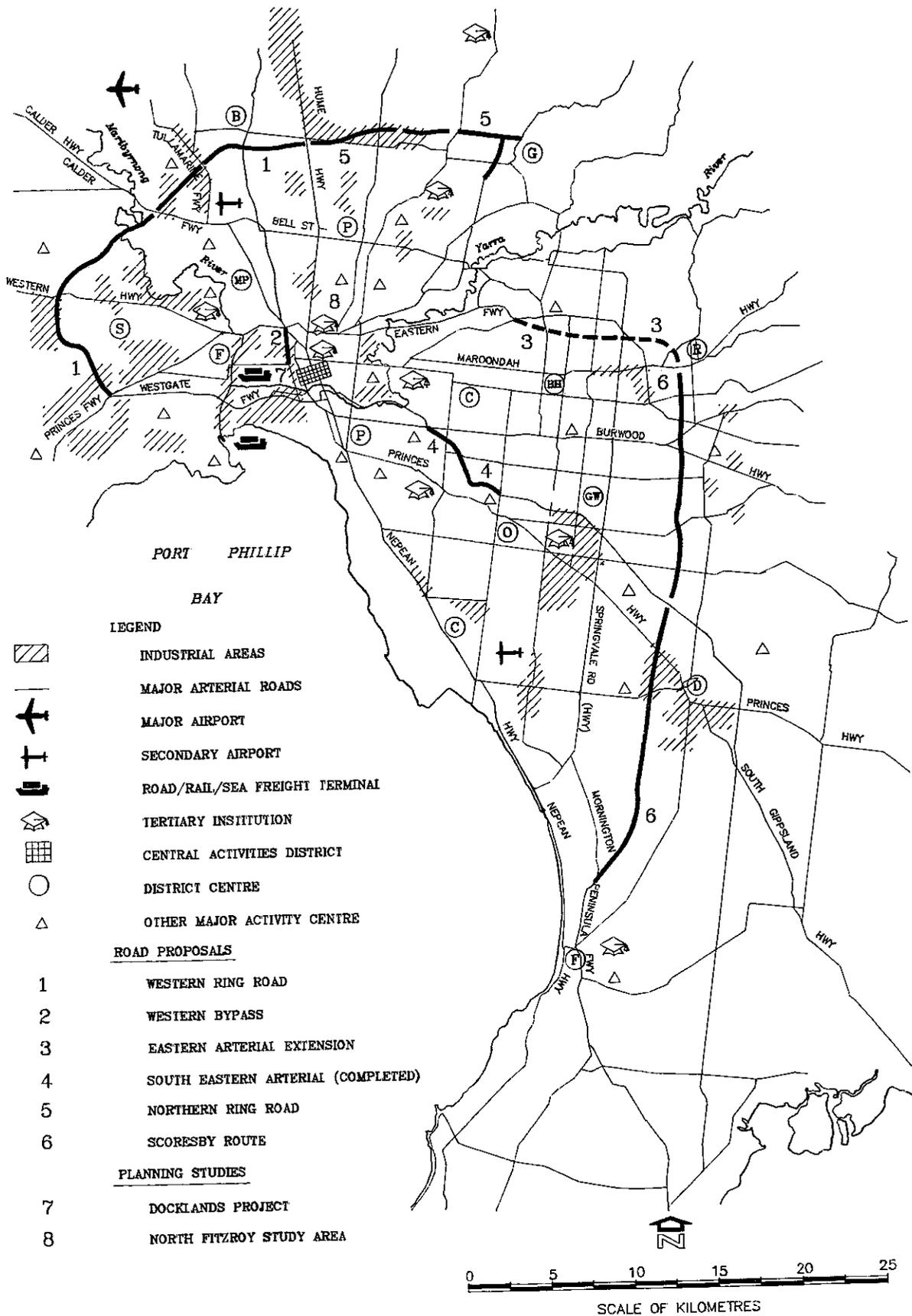


FIGURE 1