

Melbourne Planning Scheme Amendment C187 - energy, water and waste efficiency

Overview

The City of Melbourne has developed a local planning policy which seeks to increase environmental performance of buildings and precincts developed in the municipality. This policy is currently being considered for incorporation into the planning scheme.

The policy provides guidelines to ensure that the design, construction and operation of buildings and urban renewal areas:

- minimise the use of non-renewable energy sources
- minimise potable water use and increase the re-use of mains and storm water
- minimise the production of landfill waste, maximise the recycling and re-use of waste and lead to improved waste collection efficiency.

The policy updates and expands an existing policy in the Melbourne Planning Scheme which sets performance benchmarks for office development to incorporate other uses, including;

- Retail premises
- Education centres
- Accommodation

Sustainability features

The policy sets alternate performance benchmarks based on the size and type of the building, with a focus on what is reasonably achievable. There is a recognition that as the size of a building increases, so does the potential environmental impact. Further, larger buildings are often capable of delivering technological solutions at lower cost.

At the precinct level, opportunities increase further. The proposed policy recognises the additional efficiency contributions that could come from district based energy, water and waste systems within urban renewal areas. The policy encourages new buildings in urban renewal areas to be capable of connecting to planned or established alternative district water supply, energy supply, waste collection and waste treatment systems.

The policy supports and helps to implement Melbourne's eco-city goals, which are to:

- reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- conserve water and improve the health of waterways
- improve resource efficiency and manage and minimise waste.

The policy is supported by detailed technical analysis which was undertaken to demonstrate that the targets set were indeed achievable and would deliver on the City of Melbourne's eco-city targets. Objectives and performance measures within the policy also build on a body of established strategic work (City of Melbourne's Zero Net Emissions, Total Watermark – City as a catchment and Waste Management Strategy)

Other programs such as the 1200 Buildings program which focuses on existing buildings (90% of city buildings in 2020 were built before 2006) seek to complement the new policy.

Implications for planners

Better policy support for planning decision-making

Local governments have identified a clear need to improve outcomes in environmentally sustainable design (ESD) through their planning processes. The City of Melbourne C187 amendment recognises the role of local governments as a statutory authority for planning matters and seeks to get much needed policy support for assessment of development proposals, at the planning stage.

An investigation report into “Sustainability Assessment in the Planning process” by Hansen Partnership and SBE highlighted the strategic basis of the need for an sustainability assessment process within planning; *‘whilst the Victorian Planning Provisions do provide for over arching goals for sustainability, they fail to provide a more detailed framework that is necessary to implement more quantifiable aspects of sustainability in relation to matters such as water conservation, energy conservation, sustainable building principles and the use of assessment tools’.*

This policy will assist City of Melbourne’s statutory planning teams to provide consistent assessment of proposals and recognises that there is value in front-loaded consideration of sustainability.

Flow on effects

If approved in its current form, this policy will pave the way for other local governments to develop local policies targeting environmental performance as part of planning assessment. Indeed four other Victorian councils have amendments currently awaiting exhibition, with policy objectives closely aligned to City of Melbourne’s proposed policy.

As policy aligns across council boundaries, the standard of sustainable design across the board is likely to increase with a real focus on improvements in energy efficiency above the minimum standards set by the building code. The opportunity is available for strategic planning teams in other local governments to assess their own local policy strength in relation to clean energy and further their policy support in line with the approach taken by City of Melbourne and others.

Connection to Clean Energy Future package

The policy was developed during 2011 and reinforces elements of the Clean Energy Future (CEF) package. Whilst CoM had already initiated the policy amendment, compliance with new policy requirements by the private sector may be supported by the CEF package.



Carbon price mechanism (CPM)

The introduction of the Carbon price mechanism (CPM) has broad ranging implications for the economy, and these changes incentivise improved energy efficiency in new buildings and the retrofit of existing. The market for commercial and to a lesser extent residential buildings within the City of Melbourne is acutely aware of the benefits of sustainable design and this policy works in conjunction with market based approaches such as GreenStar to lift the overall standard of environmental performance.



Renewable and low carbon energy (RLCE)

The policy recognises the value of precinct approaches to decentralised more sustainable energy sources by requiring proposals within areas designated as urban renewal to be able to connect to any localised system:

“when developing land within any urban renewal area the development should be capable of connecting to available or planned alternative district water supply, energy supply, waste collection or treatment system.”

The CEF package includes measures to improve the viability of such systems being set up by improving the business case of non-standard energy supply.



Energy efficiency (EE)

The proposed policy sets benchmarks of energy efficiency for different types and scales of buildings within the City of Melbourne. The proposed policy references existing self-assessment tools which have built in targets. In doing this it allows the targets to be updated in line with changing industry standards without requiring an amendment to the planning scheme.

Further reading

- City of Melbourne website -

<http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/BuildingandPlanning/Planning/planningschemeamendments/Pages/AmendmentC187.aspx>