

# Submission form: Victoria’s draft 30-year infrastructure strategy

## Your details

<b>Name:</b>	Chris Buckingham – CEO, Jobbank Tara Anderson – CEO, Social Traders
<b>Organisation (if applicable):</b>	Jobbank & Social Traders joint submission
<b>Position (if applicable):</b>	Respective CEOs
<b>Email:</b>	██
<b>Phone:</b>	██████████

## About you

Please tell us which best describes you:

- Victorian resident
- Victorian business owner/operator
- Industry professional
- Community organisation representative
- Local government representative
- State government representative
- Researcher
- Other (please specify): Not – For - Profit

## Your focus areas

Select the topics or regions you are providing feedback on (select all that apply):

Topics	Regions
<input type="checkbox"/> Across sectors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional Victoria
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Circular economy	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban growth areas
<input type="checkbox"/> Cities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melbourne
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate change	
<input type="checkbox"/> Community infrastructure	
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Energy	
<input type="checkbox"/> Freight	
<input type="checkbox"/> Health	
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure for Victoria's First Peoples	
<input type="checkbox"/> Transport	
<input type="checkbox"/> Water	

## Your feedback

Add as many sections as you need to provide all your feedback in this submission.

<b>Topic/area:</b>	<p>Social and Sustainable Outcomes for Victorians</p> <p>Related Infrastructure Victoria objectives and topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities</b></li> <li>• <b>Victorians are healthy and safe</b></li> <li>• <b>Aboriginal people have self-determination and equal outcomes to other Victorians</b></li> <li>• <b>Victoria has a thriving natural environment</b></li> <li>• <b>Victoria is resilient to climate change and other future risks</b></li> <li>• <b>Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy</b></li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation name:</b>	<p>Ensure Victorian infrastructure projects continue to implement social procurement objectives.</p>
<b>Recommendation number:</b>	<p>New Recommendation</p>
<p>1. Do you support this topic or recommendation?</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No  <input type="checkbox"/> In part</p>
<p>2. Tell us why</p>	<p><i>We work together to ensure that social procurement practices are successfully implemented across Victoria. We exist to support better outcomes for people who face systemic disadvantage</i></p>
<p>3. Share any supporting evidence or examples</p>	<p><i>The Victorian Government’s Big Build Projects have implemented social procurement objectives since 2018. These projects and their significant infrastructure investment in the State have enabled significant social and sustainable outcomes. These include both economic and employment outcomes for those from underrepresented groups within the broader Victorian community. Including First Nations People, People with disabilities, and the long-term unemployed. Women have also historically been underrepresented within infrastructure and construction. The Social Procurement Framework has sought to disrupt these norms by creating equality policies such as the Building Equality Policy.</i></p>

*One example of the impact of prioritising social procurement is the Shared Value Partnership between Social Traders certified social enterprise SisterWorks Inc. and Yarra Trams, which highlights how infrastructure businesses and projects can drive both employment outcomes and the growth of diverse suppliers. This partnership created 833 hours of employment annually for priority jobseekers and contributed an estimated \$125,000 in annual social and economic impact. Importantly, it also enabled SisterWorks Inc to expand into the rail sector, develop new skills in manufacturing and rail safety, and grow its business capability — including increasing embroidery capacity and establishing new regional jobs. The initiative also led to more than 4 tonnes of waste being diverted from landfill each year and is projected to grow SisterWorks’ social enterprise revenue by 15% annually. This example demonstrates how, when social procurement is prioritised, it can create lasting benefits not only through jobs but by building the capability and reach of diverse suppliers. It also reflects the broader success of the Social Procurement Framework in influencing and embedding inclusive and sustainable practices across the infrastructure sector.*

*Holistically, the Social Procurement Framework has achieved positive outcomes across the 10 objectives within the Framework. The objectives provide opportunities for industries to create positive social, sustainable and environmental impacts for all Victorians.*

*Since 2018, Victoria’s infrastructure and construction industry has served as a foundational platform for the successful implementation and leveraging of the SPF. We strongly recommend that this policy continues to be included in future infrastructure planning and delivery in Victoria to ensure all Victorians benefit from infrastructure projects.*

4. Include proposed changes and improvements

*Proposed changes to the Victorian Social Procurement Framework would include*

- A revision of the terms and definitions used throughout the policy, making the policy more transparent and relevant to best practice social procurement principles.*
- Clear and direct obligations and compliance related to the framework will encourage more industry buy-in and produce more consistent reporting and outcomes.*

- 
- *A consistent approach to social procurement target setting, reporting, and compliance would strengthen accountability, improve transparency, and drive more meaningful outcomes across government and industry. This should include post-award compliance mechanisms to ensure that social enterprises named during the tender process are genuinely and appropriately engaged throughout the life of the contract — not just listed at the pre-award stage to meet requirements.*
  - *A set of defined minimum outcome targets would ensure that the framework is more likely to improve the lives of all Victorians.*
-

## More feedback (optional)

Tell us about infrastructure challenges, gaps or opportunities not covered by the draft strategy. This can include things you think we should add to an existing recommendation, or suggestions for a new recommendation.

Please provide evidence for your suggestions. This can include data, specific examples, cost-benefit analyses, surveys, or program evaluations. Also, explain how your suggestions align with the objectives of our draft strategy (see page 11 of the draft strategy).

Suggestions for new recommendations should point towards infrastructure opportunities that can deliver long-term benefits for Victorians. They should also be areas where the Victorian Government has a leading role.

## Joint Feedback

- The Victorian Social Procurement Framework (SPF) is a policy that delivers outcomes for several cohorts of Victorians that otherwise would not benefit from public and private investments.
- As Victoria has seen a decade of strong investment in infrastructure. The broader Victorian community has benefited because the SPF is a mandatory policy on most publicly funded infrastructure projects.
- As the infrastructure industry has adopted the SPF as part of its projects, tens of thousands of jobs have been filled by people who face systemic disadvantage. Furthermore, millions of dollars have been spent with social benefit suppliers.
- If small to medium enterprises were better equipped to understand, implement and support the SPF, economic and employment outcomes would significantly improve.
- The SPF as a policy is best suited to large, well-resourced organisations. We believe that if small to medium organisations had access to a simplified version of the SPF, more positive social and sustainable outcomes would be achieved.
- We recommend that the social procurement framework be reviewed and republished with simplicity and efficiency in mind. By having a less complicated policy with streamlined regulatory processes, greater compliance will likely be achieved and more outcomes delivered.
- There are clear synergies between the strategic objectives that Infrastructure Victoria has developed and the existing Social Procurement Framework. We believe that the SPF is a key policy that has delivered exceptional social and sustainability outcomes when applied to infrastructure projects. Therefore, it should be considered a key policy that should continue over the next 30 years.
- Noting that the policy has delivered hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of spending with Victorian Social Benefit suppliers (Victorian Aboriginal businesses, Victorian Social Enterprises, Australian Disability Enterprises) along with millions of hours' worth of employment for First Nations People, People with a disability, and those at risk of long – term unemployment.
- Victoria's Social Procurement Framework has been recognised internationally as a world-leading policy. <https://catalyst2030.net/victorian-social-strategy-wins-global-award/> . It would be a mistake not to continue leveraging such a highly regarded policy as part of Victoria's infrastructure journey over the next 30 years.

Continued next page

# Synergies between the Infrastructure Victoria Objectives and the Social Procurement Framework (SPF)

## First Nations

- Infrastructure Victoria's 'Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy' clearly calls out positive outcomes for First Nations People as an objective, which we support. This strategic objective is directly aligned with the SPF's objective of Opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal People. The SPF objective seeks to ensure Victorian Aboriginal People have the opportunities to have economic and employment opportunities.
- Between 2018 and 2023 inclusive, the Victorian Government has expended over \$96 million with Victorian Aboriginal Businesses<sup>1</sup>. The majority of this expenditure has been part of the Big Build infrastructure portfolio.
- We strongly believe that the SPF is a key driver for positive economic and employment outcomes for the Aboriginal People, and this policy should be used to deliver such outcomes.

## Opportunities for underrepresented Victorians

During the first four years of the Victorian SPF (from 2017), Social Traders was funded by the Victorian Government to support the growth of the certified social enterprises market while also reporting on industry adoption and social procurement spend.

Over four years, \$156 million was spent with social enterprises in Victoria. That created \$87 million in savings to society through:

- 901 jobs for the most marginalised
- \$6.3 million in community services
- 207,000 hours of training for the most marginalised
- \$1.6m donated to charity

Victoria now leads the country with 338 certified social enterprises — a result driven by the Victorian Government's early and ongoing prioritisation of social procurement and Social Traders' ongoing support and certification framework. This clear demand signal from the Victorian Government has supported the growth of the sector and enabled more social enterprises to scale, respond to opportunities, and deliver impact. Continuing to prioritise and invest in social procurement is essential to sustaining this momentum and ensuring these outcomes can grow alongside infrastructure and industry demand.

Infrastructure Victoria's objective, 'Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities', correlates with 4 of the current SPF objectives:

- Sustainable Victorian social enterprise and Aboriginal business sectors
- Sustainable Victorian regions
- Opportunities for Victorian priority jobseekers
- Opportunities for Victorians with disability

With the existing correlation that exists, there's a great opportunity to utilise Infrastructure Victoria's objectives and the SPF's achievements to date to ensure that the 30-year strategy benefits all Victorians.

Continued next page

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.buyingfor.vic.gov.au/social-procurement-annual-report-2022-23/achievements-2022-23>

## Health and Safety

In terms of Infrastructure Victoria's objective that 'Victorians are healthy and safe', the Victorian Social Procurement Framework has been delivering similar outcomes under two objectives:

- Women's equality and safety
- Supporting safe and fair workplaces

These two SPF objectives specifically relate to infrastructure, with the women's equality and safety objective having defined gender equality targets for the construction industry under the Building Equality Policy.

The Supporting safe and fair workplaces objective looks at ensuring that contractors are purchasing from suppliers that comply with industrial relations laws and promote secure employment.

## Climate Change and future risks

Infrastructure Victoria's objective to ensure 'Victoria is resilient to climate change and other future risks' has and can continue to be supported by 3 of the SPF's objectives, which are:

- Environmentally sustainable outputs
- Environmentally sustainable business practices
- Implementation of the Climate Change Policy Objectives

Since 2018, the Victorian Recycled First Policy, which has been delivered under the objective of environmentally sustainable outputs, has sought to ensure recycled contents are utilised as part of construction and infrastructure projects throughout Victoria.

## Summary

We believe that by learning from the successes that have been achieved to date on Victorian infrastructure projects that had the SPF embedded, Infrastructure Victoria's objective can be implemented in conjunction with the SPF. The SPF is well known by the Victorian government departments that commission public infrastructure, as well as the industry that builds the infrastructure. It makes sense that this policy continues as a vehicle for social and sustainable outcomes over the next 30 years.

The SPF has contributed directly to better social procurement outcomes in Victoria since its introduction in 2018. A review of the framework in consultation with business, community and government would ensure it remains current and would ensure that it continues to deliver positive outcomes for all Victorians.

Completing a review of the Social Procurement Framework will ensure that it is fit for purpose and continues to deliver benefits.

An updated framework should lead to more achievable and meaningful outcomes. Improved implementation guidance will help small to medium businesses understand the policy, its intent and the steps necessary to successfully comply with the policy.

An easier reporting framework will help in the uptake of reporting against key metrics, which in turn will provide investors and industry alike with more relevant data. These data points will cover areas such as population demographics, unemployment information, economic data, and carbon emissions.

Infrastructure Victoria has an opportunity to support social procurement by endorsing this recommendation to optimise the Victorian Social Procurement Framework. By supporting the optimisation of an already successful policy, Infrastructure Victoria would be supporting a policy that complements all of Infrastructure Victoria's 6 strategy objectives.



