

D Grade Round 2

That Victoria should cancel the Suburban Rail Loop.

Background:

The Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) aims to connect 11 of Melbourne's existing rail lines as well as build new stations in middle and outer suburban areas. The ambitious project aims to develop super hubs outside of the CBD, allowing commuters to reach destinations around Melbourne quicker by reducing strain on City Loop stations. A key component of the SRL is a rail link between Melbourne Airport and Sunshine station through Melbourne CBD, and Melbourne Airport and Box Hill.

Suburbs that have been forecast to see substantial population growth in coming decades are prioritised as major hubs for development. Larger and more well-connected stations will help with supporting the flow of people in their commutes to school and work, which will help reduce traffic during peak times and give individuals more options in where they choose to live. Suburban hubs will also encourage the development of housing and businesses, thus also increasing commercial and retail activity.

Such a big project will certainly generate thousands of jobs in the planning, construction and running of all the new rail lines. The scope and scale of the project will also mean that many areas will be closed off for extensive periods of time as rail lines and tunnelling occur.

However, critics of the project question the government's ability to find the money to see the project to its completion. The first stage of construction is estimated to cost \$34.5 billion, with the overall project predicted to cost more than \$200 billion and will be completed in 2085. Such a long-term project will need to require extensive support from the government, across all parties who will inherit the project as they get elected in and out of Parliament.

Questions for consideration:

- What does the Suburban Rail Loop hope to achieve?
- What is different about the Suburban Rail Loop and the current metropolitan train system?
- What challenges does the development of a Suburban Rail Loop pose?
- What effect will a Suburban Rail Loop have on commuters?
- To what extent will the SRL impact those living in regional Victoria?
- What areas of Melbourne does the SRL overlook? Who loses out?

Resources:

<https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/library/suburban-rail-loop/fact-sheets/suburban-rail-loop-project-overview>

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/melbourne-news-concern-victoria-unable-to-fund-pricy-suburban-rail-loop/686957ec-08cb-4a60-9271-de95f0c2bc46>

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/dec/29/suburban-rail-loop-melbourne-victoria-government-billion-dollar-project>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-12-04/calls-scrap-suburban-rail-loop-project-730/103187398>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-12-04/calls-scrap-suburban-rail-loop-project-730/103187398>

<https://www.afr.com/companies/infrastructure/federal-auditor-to-probe-labor-s-2-2b-suburban-rail-loop-commitment-20240212-p5f44b>

<https://grattan.edu.au/news/the-suburban-rail-loop-is-a-money-sink/>