

WSROC LIMITED

Western Sydney: A National Transport Infrastructure Priority Area

Response to the Inquiry into the investment of
Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger
infrastructure and services

March 2009

The WSROC Region



**Auburn
Bankstown
Baulkham Hills
Blacktown**

**Blue Mountains
Fairfield
Hawkesbury
Holroyd**

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ISBN 1 86271 0279

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SUMMARY

GENERAL OVERVIEW

WSROC has prepared this response to the ***Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger infrastructure and services*** from the perspective of Greater Western Sydney (GWS), which contains fourteen local government areas, and houses approximately 1.8 million or some 42%, of the Sydney metropolitan population

The GWS region produces more than \$80 billion in economic output annually, making it Australia's third largest economy (after Sydney CBD and Melbourne). It is therefore one of Australia's most important urban regions.

It is proposed that GWS will accommodate over half of the population growth of NSW over the next 25 years – approximately 600,000 people. Much of this growth is to be accommodated in the North-West and South-West Growth Centres. The planning for these Growth Centres has been undertaken on the basis that there will be significant investment in rail and other infrastructure to support the sustainability of the very significant population growth involved.

Many families are now questioning the true economics of 'cheap' housing on the urban fringe in light of increasing transport costs and the length of the daily commute and without adequate and significantly enhanced public transport infrastructure and services, it will be increasingly difficult to persuade families to move into the new growth areas being developed at Sydney's North-West and South-West margins.

Western Sydney is not a homogeneous region and in some of the larger local government areas census data reveals pockets of severe socio-economic disadvantage. Recent research has demonstrated that no progress has been made during the economic boom that extended from the mid nineteen nineties to 2007 and the Western Sydney region is now most at risk of further decline as the result of the economic downturn.

Previous submissions, prepared by WSROC over the past five years, have demonstrated exceptional levels of car dependency; location disadvantage due to the inadequate provision of physical and social infrastructure (including public transport); increased levels of mortgage stress and default; and problems associated with the ageing of the population.

These factors have contributed to increasing social exclusion within the region.

An environmental issue that WSROC has highlighted over many years is the poor air quality in the Sydney basin which is contributing to an unacceptable increase in the incidence of many illnesses, threatening the region's sustainability and the health and well-being of its population. This air quality issue, in part caused by the geographic nature of the Sydney basin, is also in large part a function of the inadequacy of public transport, and the associated very high levels of private car dependence, that jointly apply throughout the region

For too long planning in NSW has been a fragmented, ad-hoc process undertaken by a range of government and non-government agencies often operating in complete isolation from each other. As a result many transport plans have lacked a strategic or long-term focus, have incorporated conflicting priorities and are often ambivalent in terms of specific commitments and undertakings. Plan-making has become largely marginalised from the Government's budget-setting process and has been "captured" by the State Treasury and some large agencies such as the RTA.

This has been at a time when successive State and Federal Governments have become increasingly reluctant to invest in urban infrastructure, and there have been few deliverable results in either infrastructure investment or sustainability.

The region's disadvantage is now being further exacerbated by the NSW November 2008 mini-budget, which involved the withdrawal of a number of very important commitments to the provision of critical transport infrastructure – infrastructure that provided the fundamental underpinning of Metropolitan and sub-regional plans, the NSW State Plan and the Urban Transport Statement's objectives for GWS.

WSROC has consistently called upon the State Government to prioritise its commitments to Western Sydney and protect them; particularly its repeated commitments to public transport infrastructure in the region.

In the run-up to the 2007 election, the NSW Government made almost 150 specific commitments to the GWS region. In particular there was an explicit commitment made prior to the election to provide rail infrastructure in Western Sydney and specifically to the construction of the South-West and North-West Rail links. The Government further raised community expectations in March 2008, by reiterating its commitment to the South-West Rail link and replacement of the North-West Rail Link with a North-West Metro.

Decades of under-investment, particularly in respect of public transport provision, has left the region struggling to adequately cater for the needs of its residents. Two major studies released in 2008/09 in which WSROC was a joint partner, entitled: *Socially Sustainable Urban Renewal (UNSW, 2008)* and *North-West and West-Central Sydney Employment Strategies (UWS, 2009)*, have demonstrated with stark clarity that the region has not developed its economic base sufficiently over the past decade, and will struggle to generate new jobs and dwellings to meet government targets and community needs.

For these reasons WSROC has been calling for a greater strategic and integrated focus on issues of urban sustainability and function, and for a greater degree of Federal interest and involvement in these critically important areas of national concern. WSROC has also called for effective consultation with local communities in relation to the nature and priority of the infrastructure that is required to meet the current and future needs of the region.

It is WSROC's view, at this critical time in our region's history and development, no other area of public investment has the same potential to benefit so many different aspects of urban living as investment in soundly based, appropriately prioritised and properly integrated public transport infrastructure and systems.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The specific recommendations of this submission are that:

- 1 An appropriate overarching authority, representing local, State and Federal interests, should be established as a matter of priority to oversee the evaluation, prioritisation and integrated delivery of transport systems and infrastructure for Sydney;**
- 2 That a prioritised and integrated transport plan is established for Sydney as a matter of urgency, and that this plan is developed to operate and deliver outcomes over a long term period;**
- 3 That this plan, also as a matter of urgency, considers and resolves the following matters of great relevance to transport in Western Sydney:**
 - Reinstatement of both the South-West Rail Link as planned, and the North-West Rail link, including the possibility that the North-West link could be constructed as a CityRail line between Epping and Rouse Hill with an extension to the Richmond Line at Vineyard.**

- **Commencement of construction of the North-West Rail Link from the Richmond Line. One option is for the North-West rail Link to be commenced as a spur line from the Richmond Line at Vineyard to Rouse Hill, with construction then to proceed from Rouse Hill and Epping. This would at least establish a rail service to the Rouse Hill Town Centre.**
 - **Inclusion of both projects as part of the State Government's bid to the National Infrastructure Audit. WSROC notes that neither project was included in the list of projects put to the Federal Government, which would mean that the State Government would be required to construct both the North-West and the South-West Rail Links entirely from its own resources.**
- 4 That very careful consideration is given to the maintenance and development of Sydney's overall heavy rail network, and that great care is taken to ensure that any "metro" projects undertaken to enhance this existing system are not in fact prejudicial to its future function and viability.**

In relation to the above, it should be noted that planning for both the North West and South West rail alignments is well advanced and the environmental assessments have also been completed. This means that work could start on these projects almost immediately. If both the North-West and South-West rail links were constructed as CityRail extensions, the Government could then explore options involving the private sector to construct further metro lines in the region, including between the CBD and Epping and between Epping and Parramatta.

In terms of both the North-West and South-West rail links, it would be possible to commence construction, but delay completion. Whilst WSROC would prefer to see the lines constructed within the original timetable, a delay of 12 to 24 months would be reluctantly accepted. However, the mini-budget proposal to abandon the projects entirely or defer them indefinitely is strongly opposed by WSROC, the other organisations who joined with WSROC in writing to the Premier on this matter, as well as many other organisations, businesses, councils, communities and families in the region.

1 INTRODUCTION

On 4 December 2008 the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport referred the following reference to the Committee for inquiry and report by 18 June 2009:

The investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services, with reference to the August 2005 Report of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage, *Sustainable Cities*, and the February 2007 Report of the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, *Australia's Future Oil Supply and Alternative Transport Fuels*, including:

- (a) An audit of the state of public passenger transport in Australia;
- (b) Current and historical levels of public investment in private vehicle and public passenger transport services and infrastructure;
- (c) An assessment of the benefits of public passenger transport, including integration with bicycle and pedestrian initiatives;
- (d) Measures by which the Commonwealth Government could facilitate improvement in public passenger transport services and infrastructure;
- (e) Options for Commonwealth funding for public passenger transport services and infrastructure;
- (f) The role of Commonwealth Government legislation, taxation, subsidies, policies and other mechanisms that either discourage or encourage public passenger transport; and
- (g) Best practice international examples of public passenger transport services and infrastructure.

On 13th February 2009 the Committee invited WSROC to provide a written submission addressing this issue, given the evidence that the organisation presented at the two previous inquiries. It was also requested that the submission be sent to the committee by Friday 27 February 2009. Given the very short timeframe WSROC was granted a further two day extension.

This submission draws upon a number of research projects highlighting the issues associated with the growing mobility and decreasing accessibility of Greater Western Sydney (GWS) and considers the distributional effects that rising fuel costs are having on the region. These research projects have shown how 'liveability' is being endangered by threats to the environmental quality, social well-being and economic viability of GWS.

The submission presents some background discussion on the need for Federal involvement in public transport issues and in Section 4, provides the WSROC response to the Terms of Reference

It discusses the population growth proposed for the region over the next 20 years and highlights existing areas of socio-economic disadvantage. It looks at the way Federal and State Government transport policies are resulting in often unintended consequences from a regional perspective.

Finally the submission examines policy options and proposes recommendations to minimise energy consumption and the adverse environmental, economic, social and health impacts of motorised travel and the need to reduce the reliance on the motor car in the region.

WSROC has been lobbying on regional transport issues for many years. Successive State and Federal Governments have failed to adequately address the public transport needs of Western Sydney's growing population. Yet at this time no other area of investment has the same potential to benefit so many different aspects of urban living as public transport.

2 BACKGROUND

Greater Western Sydney (comprising the WSROC and MACROC regions) contains fourteen local government areas (LGAs) representing cities and shires which account for over 42% of the Sydney metropolitan population and a large area of the metropolitan fringe. It is one of Australia's most important urban regions.

The population is about 1.8 million people or 1 in 11 Australians. In 2006 GWS accounted for 43.4% of the population of metropolitan Sydney and 27.3% of the population of NSW.

It is proposed (Department of Planning 2005) that Western Sydney accommodate over half of the population growth in NSW over the next 25 years - approximately 600,000 people. This compares to regions such as the Hunter and the Illawarra which will grow by an additional 100,000 people over this time.

Western Sydney is not homogeneous and in some of the larger local government areas census data averages hide pockets of severe socio-economic disadvantage (Randolph and Holloway, 2003, 2004). Many of the 'middle ring' suburbs in the region are now the locations of some of the most disadvantaged communities in Australia. These areas are extensive and include parts of Auburn, Bankstown, Parramatta, Fairfield, Blacktown, Penrith and Liverpool.

Many local government areas (LGAs) in the region are also experiencing continued growth pressures whilst still dealing with backlogs and the legacy of under-investment in infrastructure provision, particularly in relation to public transport.

3 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1 Rising Oil Prices

A number of commentators have been noting the strong and rapid rise in the international price of oil. The ABS in 2005 reported the cost of 'automotive fuel' rose approximately 10% during the year to June 2005 and the monthly average cost for Sydney petrol rose 40% during the 21 months to September 2005. There are currently no indications that there will be a corresponding decline in fuel prices in the short term. In fact there was a sudden increase in oil prices in 2007/08 and rising concerns about global warming which resulted in a significant rise in public transport demand, highlighting the need for a more sustainable transport system for Sydney.

The NSW Greenhouse Plan (2005) has noted that in the last 30 years the total number of Australian cars has grown three times faster than the population. In the last decade in Sydney the average VKT per vehicle has grown more than twice as fast as the population. It was also reported that there has been little improvement in the last ten years in the average fuel efficiency of vehicles and the limited gains that have been achieved are being undermined by the increasing demand for more cars.

Although opinions vary, a number of analysts suggest that global oil production will peak within the next 20 years (Sprott and Solunac 2005). Others predict that 2005 may have been the peak year for global oil production - highlighting declining production coupled with increasing demand from China (with an increase of car sales of 15% in 2005) and India (where car sales increased by 20% in the same period).

Some commentators have noted the potential adverse scenarios that the growing gap between peak oil demand and supply will have on cities that are dependent on roads and private vehicles for urban mobility (Newman 1991). They argue that the impacts will be much greater than simply increased fuel costs but could extend into every aspect of urban economic and social life.

Newman and Kenworthy (1999) have also pointed to the low density nature of Australian cities contributing to poor public transport services. Others such as Mees (2000) have argued that high quality, integrated services would increase public transport patronage. The *Metropolitan Strategy* (Department of Planning 2005) is proposing to develop substantial release areas as well as significantly increasing densities. WSROC has consistently argued that both urban expansion and increased densities **must** be coupled with the provision of high quality integrated services.

3.2 Location Disadvantage

The National Housing Strategy (1992, page 76) noted the issue of location disadvantage as follows:

“People without private transport, especially where public transport is not readily available are likely to be disadvantaged. In particular older people, young people and members of a car-owning household who cannot use the car, are more likely to have problems and/or longer travel times to services and jobs”.

In 1997 Ian Burnley argued:

“To the extent that people move to outer suburbia to obtain affordable housing, such pricing trends may be socially inequitable unless strong policies to relocate employment and to develop public transport are pursued in tandem”.

A research paper issued by the Urban Research Program, Griffith University entitled *Oil Vulnerability in the Australian City* (Jago Dodson and Neil Sipe) December 2005, assessed the resilience or vulnerability of urban communities to increased fuel prices and how the socio-economic impacts will spread across different localities. Their research highlighted the fact that localities situated in the middle and outer suburbs of Western Sydney are the most vulnerable to the socio-economic impact of oil price rises.

In further research, based on the 2006 Census findings, the same authors recently noted the spread of the crisis creeping inwards from the urban fringes. They noted

“....a highly regressive pattern in which the impacts of higher fuel costs and increased interest rates fall on those with least capacity to absorb these impacts. Worse, the deficits in urban infrastructure and services meant the more vulnerable households had less ability to adapt to higher fuel costs by taking public transport.”

Research by the University of Western Sydney (Anne Hurni) *Transport and Social Disadvantage in Western Sydney*, UWS, 2006) shows that transport disadvantaged collector districts cover over half (53.8%) of the Sydney urban area. Just over a third (34.4%) of the Sydney urban region live in these areas (1.2 million people) and 58.2% of the people living in transport disadvantaged areas were located in Western Sydney – some 700,000 people. The report identifies older people and people with a disability as among some of the groups most at risk in Western Sydney.

International studies, particularly those from the UK, point to a strong evidence base that a lack of suitable and affordable public transport can be a significant barrier to participation in work and education and access to health services, shopping and social, cultural and recreational activities for socially disadvantaged people. A UK Government report *Making the Connections*, Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) 2003, focussed particularly on access to those opportunities that have the most impact on life chances, such as work, learning and healthcare.

The UK's Social Exclusion Unit defines social exclusion as:

‘The cumulative and reinforcing effect on people or areas which experience a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, low skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime rates, poor health and family dysfunction.’

It has also been described as occurring where people are prevented or restricted from participating fully in society, or in the production or consumption of goods and services, from political engagement and from social interaction.

In Sydney there is an inequitable distribution of public transport services across the GMR. This inequity is not a simple east/west divide, but the fact that a larger proportion of disadvantaged groups in Western Sydney are at risk of transport related social exclusion (Anne Hurni, 2006).

There is sufficient evidence to show that the inequitable distribution of public transport services across urban areas has a disproportionately adverse affect on lower income households. In the outer areas of Western Sydney, where public transport is less frequent and car dependency greater, lower income households have reduced access to employment and other services as well as having to bear an increased burden of transport costs.

3.3 Community Stress

Western Sydney is often considered to be an area of affordable housing compared to the rest of Sydney. However, this does not mean that the housing is necessarily cheap for the people who live there.

Housing affordability is a key economic consideration and must be viewed in the context of reasonable housing costs in relation to the income of those living and seeking to move there. Hidden inequalities stemming from differences in the physical and social infrastructure provided also affect affordability. Poor public transport provision, limited employment opportunities and scarce community services and facilities are all factors that erode even further the 'real' affordability of housing in the outer suburbs.

Over-reliance on cars has separated functions and established single interest precincts, changing social patterns and the way neighbourhoods and town centres operate. Active and engaging meeting places are lacking (WSROC, 2005). There is increasing evidence of 'community stress' (transport stress due to commuting times, costs and lack of public transport options coupled with housing stress). The risk of greater socio-economic polarization is increasing.

In 2001 it was estimated that 68,000 of the population of the GWS region were in housing stress (39,000 were in private rental accommodation and 29,000 mortgagees), homelessness was high and waiting times for Department of Housing accommodation long. (Randolph and Holloway, 2003). The older suburbs appeared to be less affordable than other parts of the region. While these areas had lower prices and rents than elsewhere, they also housed the bulk of Sydney's low income households.

An ABS Household Expenditure Survey, 2003-2004 highlighted that transport costs are the third largest items in household budgets after housing and food, consuming on average 14.8% of the proportion of household income in Sydney. In Western Sydney the high levels of car ownership, necessitated by poor public transport provision, coupled with the dispersion of employment opportunities and facilities and services could well contribute further to transport stress.

For many in Western Sydney there are now more opportunities and more choice. But this is not universally shared. The shift of provision of services from the public to the private sector is also exacerbating inequality.

3.4 Infrastructure Provision and Employment Development

The costs of mobility have a direct impact on the ability of households to earn an income. The problems will only escalate as Sydney's population is expected to increase by an average of almost 42,000 people per year until 2020. It should be noted that this figure is currently being revised upwards as the result of the findings of the 2006 census.

Compared with the rest of Sydney, employment in information-based services, such as finance, insurance, property and business services is significantly underdeveloped in the region. By 2001, there were below average proportions of these jobs in 12 out of 13 LGAs in Greater Western Sydney. Sydney's fastest-growing employment is now occurring in the banking, finance and business service (BFBS) sectors but these remain very highly concentrated in Sydney's extended CBD and lower north shore (51% of BFBS jobs by 2001).

Only 17% of BFBS jobs are located in Greater Western Sydney (compared with its 51% of Sydney's total manufacturing employment). The region thus lags well behind inner parts of Sydney in one of the most dynamic components of the metropolitan labour market. Parramatta LGA contains the principal concentration of employment in BFBS sectors and still stands out as Sydney's second CBD. Baulkham Hills LGA hosts the only other significant locations of BFBS jobs in Greater Western Sydney. In addition, Auburn LGA has a significant concentration of specialist business services (including security), reflecting its role as an important metropolitan control centre for distribution.

In Western Sydney 60% of all origin-destination trip activity is cross-regional and the proportion is increasing. Yet the rail system is focussed upon delivering people to the CBD and is only responsible for 5% of all passenger journeys in Sydney and 10% of the passenger kilometres travelled. WSROC is of the view that improving cross-regional journeys is likely to deliver a far bigger social return per dollar invested than simply improving access to the CBD. These points to the importance of integrating transport and strategic land use planning.

While jobs drive economic growth, transport and housing are necessary to support the growth. Western Sydney is where population growth is concentrated, where transport journeys are longest, where transport costs are highest (accentuated by recent oil price rises) and where the need to plan is greatest. There is a need to reverse the mindset that 'the technology fixes the problem' to a 'horses for courses' approach. There is plenty of overseas evidence that people will switch modes when the systems are integrated seamlessly together.

A recent research report commissioned by WSROC and led by a consortium from the Urban Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney, entitled ***North-West and West-Central Sydney Employment Strategies*** has shown that, while population is a key growth driver in Western Sydney, it will not be enough to generate sufficient new jobs to meet government targets and there will be a shortfall of almost 250,000 full time jobs by 2031.

The study found that there is currently an imbalance in the mix of jobs in the region. Impediments to growth include inefficient industry clusters, transport bottlenecks, high rates of car dependency, skills shortages, inadequate infrastructure, cost pressures on households and ineffective governance.

Substantial 're-engineering' of Western Sydney is required to meet economic and employment targets, including reassessing the jobs locations, major changes to the ways workers travel to work and ongoing efforts to raise labour force participation.

The study recommends several major infrastructure projects be approved including new rail links, improved arterial roads, enhanced infrastructure services to new employment areas and building stronger links between business and higher education to encourage innovation.

Access to employment will be critical for Western Sydney's growing population and it is essential that, on sustainability and equity grounds alone, the growth in travel demand be provided by public transport rather than reliance on private vehicle use. Rail access from Parramatta to Chatswood through Epping would have connected major employment areas and, in the longer term, could have formed part of a north-south high speed corridor.

The findings of the employment study also stressed that the provision of quality infrastructure is a major input in securing a satisfactory level of expanded employment opportunities in the sub-regions. Yet transport infrastructure in particular has suffered from chronic under-investment with significant congestion and high rates of car dependency as noted above.

The study highlighted the importance of the following infrastructure projects for the region:

Public Transport

- The South-West Rail Link
- The North-West Rail Link or Metro
- The West Metro
- The Epping to Parramatta rail link
- A major north-south Western Sydney rail link
- A major improvement in public transport operations that service the sub-regions in general.

Road Transport

- The M4 East extensions
- Improvements to the arterial roads
- Actions to enhance freight movements and transfers.

Employment Lands

Enhanced infrastructure services to new employment lands.

3.5 Unemployment

While significant improvements have been achieved, unemployment remains a significant social problem in the region, but is more geographically concentrated than is often realised. In 2001 high unemployment rates in Greater Western Sydney remained a *highly localised* phenomenon, clustered in suburbs such as Auburn and Granville in the region's inner LGAs and in Cabramatta-Fairfield, Bonnyrigg, parts of Liverpool (Miller), some suburbs of Campbelltown and the western suburbs of Blacktown LGA.

The North-West and West-Central Sydney Employment Strategies 2009 report noted that, while unemployment has fallen across Western Sydney over the last decade the region still records Sydney's (and Australia's) highest rates of unemployment.

The report also noted the complex patterns in male and female unemployment rates and in male and female labour force participation across Western Sydney. Unemployment and low labour force participation are still persisting in a localised manner and appear to be resistant to labour force stimulus generated by periods of national economic growth.

While the national unemployment rate at the end of last year was 4.2%. In the December 2008 quarter unemployment in Sydney's outer south-west region, covering Fairfield, through Liverpool to Campbelltown, reached an alarming 7.5%. In the older industrial belt of West-Central Sydney, unemployment reached 6.7% and in the North-West sub-region it topped 6.3%. These rates are worse than for any other metropolitan region in Australia, except for the eastern and northern suburbs of Adelaide, which are suffering a near terminal decline in manufacturing jobs.

The parts of Western Sydney where unemployment is rising are also areas with low labour force participation rates i.e. there are fewer jobs per household in these regions than occur elsewhere. Put differently, a job lost in a household in these areas is likely to have a much greater impact on the dollars available for the household to spend.

These findings have significant policy implications for the region. Employment participation rates for hard to place groups are improved, not just by expanding the demand for labour, but also

critically by improving this group's access to social infrastructure (including public transport) and by upgrading skills, qualifications and job experiences.

Clearly, regional growth of employment opportunities alone is not addressing the problems of labour market access experienced by many residents in particular localities of the region.

What is required is an intra-regional public transport network of corridors and services to provide intra-regional access and movement. Establishment of this network would provide greater access to facilities and services in the region, reduce reliance on motor vehicles, increase use of public transport, improve air quality, reduce motor vehicle accidents, promote an efficient and balanced transport system and provide the backbone for concentration of employment and population growth.

3.6 Ageing of the Population

The debate about the impact of the ageing population has begun. Currently the spotlight has been on the economic impacts of a large retired workforce, the provision of health and social services to an older population and the spatial impacts of substantial immigration of retirees. Yet the policy implications of decreased mobility and increased social isolation, coupled with increased housing and transport stress, still need to be addressed by all spheres of government.

Mobility is especially critical to the well-being of an older population. Affordable, adequate transport options are essential for accessing community services, especially medical services, shopping and maintaining social linkages. But in parts of Western Sydney the current urban form and service provision is ensuring that the ageing population are completely car dependent and will be left stranded when they can no longer drive.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) released a paper in 2005 outlining the six strategies for designing age-friendly built environments. This included improving the mobility options for seniors.

3.7 Sustainability Issues

In December 2004, in response to a Metropolitan Strategy Discussion Paper, WSROC noted that, despite the Sustainability Commissioner Professor Peter Newman's positive assessment of the plans for Sydney's North-West and South-West Growth Centres, serious questions remain regarding the Metropolitan Strategy's overall sustainability. The Professor stated that with these two release areas, the metropolitan region is reaching the limits to its sustainability. Given that the plans for these two Growth Centres were underpinned at that time by a significant commitment to transport infrastructure, which has now been withdrawn, a review of the Metropolitan Strategy and the associated sub-regional plans, the State Plan and the State Infrastructure is urgently needed.

While the 30-year window for the Metropolitan Strategy is stretching the ability to predict needs and demands even further into the future, some consideration must be given to what happens after this period. There is a finite capacity of the Cumberland Plain to accommodate growth within acceptable social, economic and environmental parameters; even when improvements to technology are factored in. A real attempt should be made to identify what are the sustainable limits to growth.

The North-West rail option, along with the South-West railway and the CBD link was the backbone of the NSW Metropolitan Strategy. In the Inner North and North-West Sydney sub-regional strategies which cover the WSROC and NSROC regions, the North-West rail option was the first and largest infrastructure commitment. Councils had agreed to housing and employment targets on the promise of infrastructure.

3.8 Climate Change

Motor vehicles are responsible for approximately 14% of carbon emissions in Australia. WSROC believes that a considerable reduction in overall greenhouse emissions can be achieved by changes in the type of ground transport infrastructure used.

The replacement of private vehicle use with more greenhouse efficient transport systems including rail, and increased provision of other forms of public transport, can contribute to a significant reduction in the overall per capita greenhouse emissions associated with high levels of car dependency.

The case of air quality in the Sydney basin is an issue that WSROC has raised for many years, serving to illustrate the very important issue of air quality more generally. Sydney is a large, sprawling city, with a very high dependence on private vehicle use. It is also a city located within a classical 'pollution basin', where air pollutants from transport and other sources tend to be trapped by prevailing geographic and meteorological conditions.

Of great concern is the fact that levels of air pollution are greater in Western, South-Western and North-Western Sydney than in other parts of the basin. Elevated levels of air pollution are known to cause unacceptable increases in the incidence of many illnesses, including respiratory diseases, coronary cancer and other very serious conditions.

The city experiences regular exceedance of established air quality goals, largely as a consequence of the city's high and increasing dependence on private road transport, coupled with the natural tendency of the Sydney basin to 'trap' and retain air pollution.

The reality is that great care will need to be taken during any further development in, or impacting upon Western Sydney, to ensure that air pollution does not in fact become a limiting factor of future growth and development of the region.

3.9 GWS Urban Development Health Impact Assessment 2007

The GWS Urban Development HIA was a research and partnership project managed by WSROC with the support of the Area Health Services, NSW Health and UNSW. The project aimed to develop knowledge and expertise to improve planning of urban growth and management for the ultimate benefit of the health and well-being of the region's residents.

The project involved an analysis of urban planning for Greater Western Sydney in the light of research, from Sydney itself and similar regions, on the links between the urban environment, service and infrastructure provision and the effects of these parameters on health and well-being. "Health and well-being" were broadly defined and included such issues as isolation, stress, work-family balance, as well as the incidence of disease and illness.

Scoping of the project identified a limited number of "urban dimensions" (these being transport and accessibility, urban form and nature, employment and social infrastructure) and "health determinants" (these being air, water, and climate, access to services and fresh food, social capital and connectedness, physical activity, safety and injury and noise). These dimensions and determinants were chosen for analysis as they were relatively well studied internationally, with strong established connections between them. The project considered these dimensions and determinants in an analysis of potential scenarios of urban development for the region, based upon past experience of urban growth, the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy goals and principles and comparative urban development plans/patterns from similar regions elsewhere. The identification of health and well-being "indicators" and/or a "checklist" for urban management also formed part of the project, as well as an equity analysis.

The Final Report *Health Impact Assessment of the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy (2005) in relation to Greater Western Sydney* was released in October 2007.

The GWS HIA identified key aspects of the built and natural environment of Western Sydney which most affect the health and well-being of the population.

3.10 An Agenda for Sustainability and Well-Being for Western Sydney

WSROC prepared a draft ***Agenda for Sustainability and Well-being in Western Sydney*** for its 2008 Regional Conference *Sydney – the other city: building a sustainable Western Sydney by 2030*. The Agenda was developed from the outcomes of the GWS HIA project and other policy documents, particularly FutureWest: GWS Regional Planning and Management Framework (WSROC 2005).

The Agenda identified seven key issues for the region in achieving sustainable development and the well-being of the population including:

- Urban Form and Nature;
- Transport;
- Economic Development;
- Healthy Regional Food Production;
- Social and Cultural Infrastructure;
- Resource Limits and City Containment; and
- Equity.

Overall the Agenda proposes to change the way regional centres, infrastructure and localities are designed and managed. It seeks to widen the focus of sustainability from individual behavioural change (such as reducing household energy and water use), important as this is, to developing strategies for structural change in places.

This involves making environments more liveable; building a mix of housing types and tenure in each local area; improving public transport infrastructure and service levels; preserving a level of self-sufficiency in locally produced fresh food; building in opportunities for every day physical activity through safe and appealing design of neighbourhoods; and so on.

The Agenda argues that social, environmental, cultural and economic issues need to be considered together in an ecological way. How the 'human ecological systems' interact with the 'natural ecological systems' will determine the region's sustainability and the health and well-being of its population.

4 WSROC RESPONSE TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

4.1 (A) An Audit of the State of Public Passenger Transport in Australia

Transport Disadvantage in Western Sydney: Community consultations undertaken in the Western Sydney region for many years have pointed to poor accessibility and transport difficulties being experienced by residents. There is a need to increase the accessibility for all residents of the region to facilities, opportunities and services located both within and outside its boundaries. Upgrading of infrastructure is urgently required for commercial, private and public transport at an equitable cost to the established community and to ensure the adequate provision of services for new development.

The *Western Sydney Regional State of the Environment Report* (WSROC 2000 section 3.2.4) noted that:

‘Transport was recognised in the community workshops as a major pressure on social and environmental sustainability. Exhaust gasses add to pollution and increase global warming levels. Costs of transport are regarded as high in time and money.’

Many urban areas in Western Sydney are hampered by inadequate arterial road systems which result in traffic intrusion into existing residential areas, coupled with grossly deficient public transport provision. A “Catch 22” situation also exists whereby public transport has not been *increased* as a result of high car ownership and car ownership has not *decreased* because public transport has not been improved.

Poor Public Transport: Western Sydney has always suffered from poor access to public transport which has had a long history of operational and patronage problems. Sydney’s public transport is split between State Rail, Sydney Transit (which operates buses in the central and eastern suburbs) and a number of loosely co-ordinated private operators throughout the western region.

The rail network in Western Sydney has not been significantly expanded since the 1930s when the region’s population was less than a fifth of what it is today. The result is that urban expansion is pushing residential growth further and further away from the existing rail network, increasing dependence on private cars and buses. Yet there has been little integration between the rail and private bus networks; the use of local buses as feeders to the higher capacity rail systems has been underdeveloped and, in many instances, is no longer relevant to people’s transport needs. Travel between outer suburbs is very difficult and results in high car dependence for cross-suburban trips.

Western Sydney’s economy and the welfare of the community stand to lose if new approaches to deal with Sydney’s transport problems are not adopted. The State Government has initiated a number of transport reforms, including consolidation of private bus contract areas, harmonisation of private and public transport services, development of an integrated network of bus corridors (but with only 17 out of the proposed 43 bus corridors delivered over the past four years) and announcement of major new rail proposals (now cancelled – see below), but these will require substantially increased funding and a high level of ongoing government commitment.

Inadequate transport planning and funding in Sydney, coupled with a lack of investment has seen Sydney fall behind other Australian and world cities in terms of its public transport performance. This is starting to reflect on its claims for ‘global city’ status. Over the last 10 years public transport patronage has grown by 30-40% in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth, but only 5% in Sydney.

Travel Patterns: Over many years urban release has been taking place on a massive scale in Western Sydney. The land was cheap due to poor accessibility and a lack of services and facilities. Low-income families moving into the area had no choice but to rely on the car, as there were few public transport services and even basic facilities were either dispersed or available only in distant

centres. The need for a second car (or a third) is now firmly entrenched in the minds of the population, with the result that high levels of car ownership are exacerbating income deprivation in many areas. To bring about any change will require a massive alteration to a lifestyle that has developed out of necessity.

In summary, Australian cities and in particular the fringes of these cities are highly car and oil dependent. In Western Sydney the private motor car is used for the vast majority of trips - 76% for work and 71% for all trip purposes. While Sydney's annual total vehicle VKT increased on average 2.3% each year from 1991 onwards, the patterns were geographically uneven – with a 23% increase in outer and south-west Sydney compared with a 10% decline in inner and eastern Sydney.

In 2001 travel times by public transport for non-work purposes varied across Greater Western Sydney LGAs, with times of up to 10 and 20 minutes greater than the Sydney average. Average travel times for commuting trips by both car and public transport for Greater Western Sydney residents were generally longer than for the rest of the Sydney SD. Car commuting trips in the morning peak are up to 17 minutes longer in many areas. Travel times by public transport for non-work purposes varied across the region with times of up to 10 and 20 minutes greater than the Sydney average (in areas such as Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Campbelltown and Hawkesbury).

Although there is now greater recognition of transport issues and the projected level of growth in the Metropolitan Strategy, current funding strategies are likely to result in a “business as usual” approach to infrastructure provision. The State Government had committed to a major new North-West/CBD/South-West rail line and the provision of strategic bus corridors, but the 2008 NSW mini-budget cancelled this commitment. Also, even with the allocation of funding applied at that time, it appeared insufficient to address the years of under-investment, particularly in urban regions such as Greater Western Sydney. Meanwhile, the Federal Government over the previous twelve years had withdrawn completely from funding of urban public transport infrastructure.

Sydney's Transport Challenge: Successive media reports during 2008 have highlighted the increasing congestion on Sydney's arterial road system. Traffic speeds of 31 km/hr on the M2 Motorway/Lane Cove Tunnel and the Gore Hill Expressway in 2007-2008 were down from 38 km/hr in the previous year. A drop from 40km/hr on the M5/Eastern Distributor to 24 km/hr also occurred. Travel times on Victoria Road were down from 29 km/hr five years ago to 23 km/hr. Journey times on Windsor Road now takes 10 minutes longer in the morning peak than they did twelve months ago.

At the same time tolls have been increased with residents in the North-West having to pay \$7.10 each way (\$4.40 of that for the Lane Cove Tunnel) and over \$10 if they cross the harbour.

About 17 million trips are made through the Lane Cove Tunnel each year (70,000 a day in November 2008) but a Metro would have carried three times this number. While 113 more buses would carry 9,000 people they still have to contend with the traffic congestion.

In 2004 8,800 trucks used Pennant Hills Road each weekday, half of which were six, eight or nine axle trucks carrying 40 gross tonnes or more. Average peak travel speeds were 25 km/hr but were often as low as 14/km/hr.

All these statistics cast doubt on the assertion that more motorways are the solution to Sydney's transport problem.

Issues for North-West Sydney: In 2006 the North-West sub-region has the lowest proportion of trips by public transport of any sub-region in Sydney. In 2006 there were 39,693 people who caught public transport to work (train, bus tram or ferry) in North-West Sydney, compared to 243,093 who drove in private vehicles (car-as-driver, car-as-passenger, motorbike or truck). This represented 11.4% of the sub-region's population using public transport, while 69.9% used a

private vehicle, compared with 13.6% and 68.6% in the WSROC region and 18.0% and 60.6% respectively in Sydney SD.

A large proportion (54%) of the school children in North-West Sydney travel to school by private vehicle.

North-West residents spend on average 41 minutes driving per person per day, which is higher than the Sydney average of 37 minutes. Average distance travelled per person per day (44 km) and average VKT per person per day (27 km) by North-West residents are both markedly higher than the Sydney averages of 38 km and 20 VKT respectively.

The Census data clearly demonstrates that the use of public transport is related to its availability as an effective alternative to the car. Overall in the North-West sub-region in 2006 only 5.4% of the population travelled to work by train, and 1.6% by bus. This represented a 0.1% decline in train use since 2001, but a 0.1% increase in bus use during the same period of time.

In 2006 only 0.4% of the North-West Sydney population cycled to work compared to 0.6% in Sydney overall. Also only a small proportion (2.0%) walked to work compared to 2.4% in WSROC and 4.2% in Sydney SD. This was a slightly lower proportion than was found in the other two Western Sydney sub-regions.

The North-West sub-region also had higher proportions of residents working at home (3.7%), comparable with the 3.9% in Sydney SD, but higher than in the other two Western Sydney sub-regions.

The data clearly demonstrated the high levels of car dependency that exists in the sub-region. In Blacktown LGA a much higher proportion travelled by train (8.1%) compared to Baulkham Hills (1.7%). Bus patronage was lowest in Hawkesbury (0.3%) and highest in Baulkham Hills (3.0%).

Some 19,625 households in North-West Sydney did not have a car (representing 8.5% of households). Just over one third (33.7%) had 1 vehicle, 40.0% had 2 and 17.9% had 3 or more vehicles. This compares with 13.7% with no vehicles, 33.7% with 1 vehicle and 12.8% with 3 or more vehicles in the Sydney metropolitan area as a whole.

Vehicle ownership per head of population in the sub-region increased greater than the population growth. Between 2001 and 2006 there was a 6.0% increase in the number of vehicles in the North-West compared with a population increase of 4.8%.

Work trips in Greater Western Sydney varied, from 62% of trips being made by car in Auburn to over 80% in some of the outlying LGAs such as Camden (85%), Baulkham Hills (84%) and Hawkesbury (83%). There was a higher proportion of commuting by train than Sydney's average in some inner LGAs such as Holroyd and Parramatta and high train use in the Blue Mountains and Campbelltown.

However, Greater Western Sydney displayed significantly lower levels of commuting by bus (2%) than the average for the rest of the Sydney Statistical Division (SSD) (6%).

Travel times by public transport for non-work purposes varied across Greater Western Sydney LGAs, with times of up to 10 and 20 minutes greater than the Sydney average. Average travel times for commuting trips by both car and public transport for Greater Western Sydney residents were generally longer than for the rest of the Sydney SD. Car commuting trips in the morning peak are up to 17 minutes longer in many areas. Travel times by public transport for non-work purposes varied across the region with times of up to 10 and 20 minutes greater than the Sydney average (in areas such as Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Campbelltown and Hawkesbury).

The high volume of traffic within the region, with a mix of private and public passenger, freight and commercial vehicle travel, places pressure on the sparse arterial road network. During the morning peak (7am to 9am), more than 1,800 vehicles per hour travel on many arterial roads throughout

Greater Western Sydney. Many other roads also experience traffic volumes of 800 to 1,800 vehicles, even though they were not originally designed for such levels. The problem of high volumes on roads built for lower capacities is exacerbated by poor connectivity with other local roads and, prior to the opening of the Westlink M7, a lack of north-south regional links.

Inquiry into the Transport Needs of the North-West Sector: On 7th January 2009 the Legislative Council's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 released its report on the *Transport Needs of Sydney's North-West Sector*. The report and its nine recommendations are now with the NSW Government for consideration, with a response to the Committee required to be provided by 19th June 2009.

In line with its continuing advocacy on this issue WSROC prepared a submission and was represented at the Inquiry held on 7th November 2008. The Committee's report made numerous references to the WSROC submission and the evidence presented to the Inquiry. The Committee was of the view that the North-West Sector has suffered significantly from a lack of public transport infrastructure.

Amongst other recommendations the committee concluded that the State Government should:

- Commit to the funding of the North-West Rail link;
- Prepare a submission for the North-West Rail link to be included in the National Infrastructure Priority List;
- Prepare an Integrated Transport Plan for the sub-region;
- Establish an Integrated Transport Planning Authority; and
- Establish a panel of transport experts to develop and Integrated Transport Strategic Plan for Sydney.

The committee was highly critical of the failure of the NSW Government to address the lack of public transport infrastructure to service the well-documented needs of North-West Sydney over the past decade and the continuing cycle of commitments followed by broken promises. It concluded that this discrimination against this area has resulted in an unsustainable reliance on private vehicle use and ever-increasing tolls, impacting upon businesses, social and family life.

The November 2008 NSW Mini-Budget: Unfortunately, as the result of the November 2008 NSW Mini-budget, a substantial proportion of the proposed transport infrastructure needed to support the objectives of the Metropolitan Strategy and sub-regional population, housing and employment growth strategies, has now been deferred or cancelled altogether. Major program cuts were \$12 billion for the North-West Metro, \$1.4 billion for the South-West Rail link and \$200 million for the Vineyard to Schofields rail line. This represented a very significant diversion of funds away from Western Sydney, whereas \$1.8 billion was allocated for a Sydney CBD Metro system. This is of particular concern for Greater Western Sydney, which is being targeted to accommodate over 600,000 people over the next 25 years.

The Epping to Chatswood rail link, originally due to open in 2008 opened at the end of February 2009 in the form of a shuttle service. It is planned to be incorporated into the Sydney rail network at the end of the year. It was intended to be an important component of the Metropolitan Rail Expansion Project, ultimately linking to the North-West Rail Link, but the latter has now been cancelled. The link was originally planned to form part of the proposed Parramatta to Chatswood Rail Line but the Parramatta to Epping component has been indefinitely deferred.

A further area of considerable concern was that of the \$150 million allocated for the purchase of 300 new buses "to offset the scrapping of the North-West Metro Rail line" only 100 of these buses have been allocated to the North-West sub-region. Not only does this herald a return to an emphasis on road transport in favour over other forms of public transport but also reflects the NSW Government's failure to grasp the enormity of the transport problems facing this sub-region of Sydney.

Serious Rail Capacity Constraints: There is a lack of capacity in the Sydney rail system, particularly in the CBD, with resulting bottlenecks. The system is rapidly approaching gridlock. Over the past thirty years there has been only incremental investment in infrastructure. For many years numerous transport strategies have been investigated and planned but with no integration between them.

An adequate integrated land/use transport plan and a Transport Co-ordination Authority for Sydney are well overdue.

As the result of the cancellation of past commitments there is even greater uncertainty and an urgent need for review of a number of the NSW Government's strategic documents, including the Metropolitan Strategy, the State Plan and the Infrastructure Strategy.

The problems on the Western Railway line, which was to be eased by the Rail Clearways Project and the expansion of Sydney's rail system, will continue to have lengthy and onerous travel times, high cost, not just in monetary terms but also travel time, a lack of bus/train combinations and low frequency. The line also has poor access for people with a disability.

Construction of rail infrastructure, particularly the North-West and south-West rail links, would have greatly improved access to key employment destinations for Western Sydney workers including the Norwest Business Park and Macquarie Park. It would also have assisted in the growth of other new centres at Rouse Hill and Leppington.

Without this investment, the current pattern of dispersed employment will continue. This in turn will make it much harder to develop the 'critical mass' required to drive the growth in higher order and specialist jobs within key centres, which is essential to Western Sydney's future employment and economic development.

Questions have arisen as to whether the Government target to get 30% of freight onto rail could actually be met. The Southern Sydney Freight line will link Macarthur to Chullora and a new dedicated freight line from Strathfield to Newcastle would help to ease congestion in freight and passenger services, allowing an extra 100-150 passenger train movements a day through Sydney's north and the central coast. ARTC are seeking \$830 million for the latter project.

With the Federal government's commitment through Infrastructure Australia to fund, or co-fund major new infrastructure projects there is now an opportunity to fix Sydney's major transport problems.

There is no doubt that the funding of new transport infrastructure is expensive. Extensive economic appraisal needs to be given to a complete review of the range of transport alternatives available. This may reveal a solution that can deliver the greatest amount of accessibility per dollar of government expenditure on transport, both on land and in the air.

Transport Improvements and Proposals to Date: As previously indicated the North-West sector suffers from severe deficiencies in public transport provision. Projects completed since the early 1990s to date include:

- M2 Motorway
- M2 bus lanes
- Bus Transitways from Rouse Hill to Parramatta and Blacktown to Parklea
- Windsor/Old Windsor Road upgrade
- Electrification of the Richmond Line
- Duplication of sections of the Richmond Line (underway but part deferred)
- M7 Motorway
- Bus priority measures

However, there are several critical infrastructure projects which have previously been identified and/or committed to by the State Government but not yet commenced. These include:

- North-West Rail Link (later N-W Metro) to Rouse Hill with a potential extension to the Richmond Line at Vineyard
- Bus Transitway from Parklea to Castle Hill. This section was dropped from the final section of the proposed T-WAY that was to have run from Blacktown to Castle Hill via Parklea
- Strategic bus corridors and cross-regional bus services
- West-facing ramps on the M2 at Windsor Road and widening parts of the M2 to three lanes.

Of these the North-West Rail Link and/or North-West Metro is by far the most significant and will be discussed in a later section.

Long Distance Freight and Passenger Transport Issues: Greater Western Sydney is a major destination region for freight and a major source region for freight destined for both internal markets, for the rest of Sydney, for destinations around Australia and for export. There is currently a conflict between managing road-based freight transport and the increasing use of the private car.

WSROC is of the view that long distance country rail should be factored into freight improvement and that the importance of long distance passenger rail journeys should not be overlooked.

Also all Governments should be encouraged to follow the example of Victoria and reduce the demand for air travel for medium distances such as Sydney to Goulburn and Canberra etc. as a means of reducing car and air travel and thereby transport fuel demand.

4.2 (B) Current and Historical Levels of Public Investment in Private Vehicles and Public Passenger Transport Services and Infrastructure

The Public Transport Imperative: While the Federal Government's involvement has been in freight rail and road systems which provide intra and inter-city connectivity at local ,State and national levels, WSROC has consistently argued that the Commonwealth needs to have a much more strategic and co-ordinated focus with an emphasis on supporting public transport. Australia is one of the few developed countries in the world that does not provide some funding support for urban public transport. Spain for example has just spent over €7 billion on building the high speed network the details of which are outlined below in section (G).

Road Dominance: As Western Sydney's population had grown dramatically the provision of hospitals, universities, social services and public transport infrastructure to support the families pouring in has been inconsistent, with backlogs in many areas.

There is an inequitable allocation of bus services in the region. Only a few routes in Western Sydney are serviced by Government buses. The region still does not receive the same service level or quality of bus services that eastern Sydney residents enjoy.

However, roads were provided much more consistently as the region's population increased. Over 120 kms of motorway have been constructed since the 1970s, much of it financed by the private sector and funded through tolls, while only 14 km of rail line (the East Hills link to Glenfield built in the 1970s and Olympic Park Spur line) has been provided.

Although the construction of a motorway network was appropriate to support freight and commercial traffic, the failure to provide a complementary public transport network means that traffic on these motorways is reaching capacity much more quickly and they now play a much less effective role in supporting the regional economy.

Urban Transport Needs: The provision of economically efficient urban systems, where the time and energy required to move people and goods is minimised, contributes to the development of a more productive region. In contrast an urban form that produces congestion pressures, delays, capacity constraints, higher energy costs and other inefficiencies can substantially erode the economic advantages of undertaking business activities. European and American examples have shown that the land use changes associated with the development of rapid transit systems can increase economic capacity, while at the same time lessening the environmental impact in the transport sector.

In 2000-2001 338 million tonnes of goods and commodities were move into, through, or within Sydney at annual growth rate of 7.4%. Most (86%) of this freight is moved by road. Rail also plays a key role in the land transport of bulk and heavy products and accounts for 20% of containers to and from Port Botany.

As industrial areas expand in Greater Western Sydney the east-west transport task is expected to grow rapidly.

4.3 (C) An Assessment of the Benefits of Public Passenger Transport, Including Integration with Bicycle and Pedestrian Initiatives

Transport systems (modes, networks and service levels) are internationally recognised as being key determinants of sustainability and well-being in the community. Vehicle emissions affect air quality and greenhouse gas concentrations. Whether people are prepared to walk and/or cycle is strongly influenced by how safe they feel doing so, which is determined by vehicle congestion, speed and road design. Commuting affects stress levels and available time spent with family and recreation. Public transport modes and service levels affect all of those things.

The twin task is to shift people from their cars to more sustainable transport nodes, while reducing the need for the amount of travel. Improving public transport involves a combination of new within-region transport infrastructure and increased public transport service levels and amenity. Increased “active transport” (walking, cycling etc) requires more facilities and safer travel environments. Land use and infrastructure decisions affect these strategies.

Motor vehicle injury and fatalities, while generally decreasing, are still disproportionately high in Western Sydney compared to other parts of Sydney.

In addressing the community's mobility needs, planning and subdivision design have placed increasing emphasis and prominence on the needs of motorised vehicles and road networks rather than pedestrians or cyclists. The steady increase in standards of road design may have actually disadvantaged many in the community by directing attention away from mobility requirements.

Despite the high use of the motor car for a large percentage of householder's transportation there are still many people who use walking, cycling and public transport as their main means of moving about.

4.4 (D) Measures by which the Commonwealth Government Could Facilitate Improvement in Public Passenger Transport Services and Infrastructure

Sydney is a major international city and must compete on the world stage as Australia's pre-eminent global city. This means that it must be able to operate efficiently and competitively as well as in a sustainable and equitable manner.

In turn, the success of Western Sydney is critical to the economic success of Sydney and through it the nation. Greater Western Sydney is home to one in 11 Australians and is Australia's third-largest regional economy. Yet the region is suffering from increasing growth pressures as its population increases and economic activity expands.

The State Government has done much to address these issues but it has limited resources and it has indefinitely postponed most of its previous commitments to Western Sydney. As a result, plans such as the Metropolitan Strategy have identified and prioritised only the most critical key infrastructure projects, but even those that still remain will take years to complete. Local government will also need additional financial support to provide the costly physical infrastructure required to meet the Metro Strategy's dwelling and employment targets.

For these reasons alone, greater strategic Federal Government engagement in the issues affecting Sydney and Western Sydney is critical. The Federal Government is already involved in urban issues but in a piecemeal and inconsistent way, for example, in relation to airports and national highway and freight corridors, many of which also combine Local, State and Federal responsibilities. The Commonwealth needs to have a much more strategic and integrated focus to its engagement in urban areas and it also needs to fully consult with local communities in relation to the design of the infrastructure it does provide.

WSROC is of the view that the Federal Government should strategically fund, in cooperation with State and Local Governments, the provision of sustainable urban infrastructure including (but not restricted to) transport, health, housing, education and communications.

Services and Infrastructure: WSROC welcomed the State Infrastructure Plan and the Urban Transport Statement released in 2006 which contain strategies for investment and the commencement of public transport projects, but much more needs to be done. This is underscored by Greater Western Sydney's importance to the national economy and projected population growth of over 600,000 over the next 25 years.

Substantial and sustained investment in transport infrastructure and services will be required over the next decade to reduce car dependency, address backlogs and to meet the needs of this expanding population in accessing services and jobs. The Federal Government must play a key role in contributing to and facilitating this investment.

4.5 (F) The Role of Commonwealth Government Legislation, Taxation, Subsidies, Policies and Other Mechanisms that Either Discourage or Encourage Public Passenger Transport

The Federal Government could provide tax concessions for regular public transport commuters equivalent to those provided through the FBT system to employees with company cars.

WSROC is of the view that all Federal taxation and grant arrangements should be reviewed to ensure that they do not discriminate against the providers, operators and users of public transport and rail services.

The Government should hypothecate a proportion of the fuel excise taken from Western Sydney motorists back to the region in the form of increased expenditure on public transport infrastructure.

4.6 (G) Best Practice International Examples of Public Passenger Transport Services and Infrastructure

Rail as an Alternative to Aviation: In Europe there has been substantial investment in rail infrastructure which has had a marked impact on the demand for air travel. For example, Spain now has 10,000 kilometres of high speed rail track and 90% of its population living less than 50 kilometres from a bullet train. Nowadays the notion that heavy rail systems only work where there are high population densities has been questioned.

Spanish airlines experienced a 0.5% fall in domestic load factor (down to 69.2%) following a 13% slashing of capacity in the last 3 months of 2007. There was a reduction of 205 air flights between Madrid and Barcelona at that time. The drop in air travel was around 25% in 2008. The airlines are now focussing their flights on passengers wanting to fly beyond key hubs.

British Airways in 2008 also reported a 6% fall in passengers since November 2007. In Europe it has been found that trains are ideal for journeys up to 3 hours in length, with planes catering for the longer journeys.

Congestion charging has resulted in a 15% reduction of traffic in central London and much improved accessibility for bus, taxi and foot travel, leading to much higher amenity and a more efficient city.

In the UK stringent loading/unloading traffic regulations also confine such activities to out of peak hours, freeing up more road space and better traffic flow.

The first high speed train connection in Spain was built between Madrid and Seville and opened in 1992. The Madrid to Malaga line opened in December 2007 and Madrid to Barcelona in February 2008. The high speed trains travel with speeds up to 300 kilometres per hour and the 660 km trip between Madrid and Barcelona takes 2 hours 30 minutes or less. Punctuality is given a high priority and, if the trains are more than 5 minutes late, passengers are given a complete fare refund. AVE trains have videos and music players and seating that can be swivelled to face the direction of travel.

Other positive comments have included the preference for more space, greater comfort than experienced in planes, faster check-in times and arrival and departure from city centres. A further advantage is that, unlike airports, stations can be built underground and there is the potential to develop the air rights above stations to help fund the cost of provision of the infrastructure.

There has been a trend back to public transport around the world. Cities such as Singapore and Hong Kong have been working to long term transport plans over decades and have been building integrated and well-designed networks.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Summary

The Western Sydney region confronts a very serious shortage of transport infrastructure, particularly non road based transport infrastructure, which has in turn led to an over-reliance on transport by private motor vehicles.

This situation, and the future outlook for the region, has been exacerbated by the cancellation of a number of important and previously committed transport infrastructure projects in the November 2008 NSW mini-budget.

The core position argued in this submission is that the resolution of Sydney's transport and transport infrastructure challenges need to be undertaken on a prioritised and integrated basis.

WSROC believes that such an approach is essential, and would lead to outcomes that would be in the best interests of all of Sydney, including but not limited to Western Sydney.

We further believe that such an approach would stimulate the very vital economic activities that rely on the development and maintenance of effective transport systems.

In our view however, if transport issues continue to be approached in isolation, as has so often been the case in the past, then Western Sydney's transport challenge will become even greater, and the existing levels of socio-economic disadvantage and inequity in the region will further increase.

The recently released NSW Legislative Council's report on the Transport Needs in Sydney's North-West Sector highlighted the fact that Western Sydney suffers very significantly from a lack of public transport infrastructure, compared to other regions of the City.

The report recommended that the NSW Government should:

- Commit to the funding of the North-West Rail link; and
- Prepare a submission for the North-West Rail link to be included in the National Infrastructure Priority List.

These were two of nine recommendations, and at its Executive Management Committee (EMC) Meeting of 29th January 2009, WSROC formally endorsed and supported all nine recommendations.

At the WSROC Board Meeting of 26th February, 2009 it was resolved that, in addition to supporting the Legislative Council's recommendations calling on the NSW Government as a priority to continue planning and undertaking land acquisition for the North-West rail link from Epping to Rouse Hill, the Committee be provided with a report outlining the benefits of a metro system as opposed to the planned North-West heavy rail system.

As argued elsewhere in this submission, all forms of transport policy must be linked to land use considerations through an integrated, holistic and prioritised approach.

Management of Growth and Change

We believe that what is needed is the establishment of a spatial structure as the basis for managing growth and change in Western Sydney.

This structure should respond to greater self-containment and regionalism and promote more efficient use of regional infrastructure. The elements of this proposed spatial structure should

include metropolitan decentralisation of high-growth advanced service sector jobs, access to knowledge infrastructure and social and cultural facilities, retrofitting of an intra-regional transport network, renewal of the older regional industrial and residential core and major centres and the development of a regional employment growth corridor.

This task requires effective planning, technical and financial expertise but most of all political will.

The lack of a robust long-term, prioritised and integrated public transport plan, coupled with the absence of commitment to the funding of the infrastructure required to underpin such a plan, is placing Sydney at risk of being unable to properly and fully benefit from the Building Australia Fund.

This is a matter of very serious concern, particularly at a time when the Federal Government is expressing support for public transport for the first time in decades.

Recent developments including the cancellation of critical Western Sydney transport projects, and a general inconsistency and indeed absence of direction on transport infrastructure matters on the part of the NSW Government simply confirms, in our view, the very urgent need to develop a comprehensive public transport infrastructure and investment plan for Sydney, especially Western Sydney.

This plan should be developed to operate over a 25 to 30 year time frame with bipartisan commitment and support to ensure that Sydney's public transport network is overhauled and expanded to meet the needs of a 21st century city, and **all** not just some of the citizens of that city.

5.2 Specific Recommendations

The specific recommendations of this submission are that:

- 1 An appropriate overarching authority, representing local, State and Federal interests, should be established as a matter of priority to oversee the evaluation, prioritisation and integrated delivery of transport systems and infrastructure for Sydney;**
- 2 That a prioritised and integrated transport plan is established for Sydney as a matter of urgency, and that this plan is developed to operate and deliver outcomes over a long term period;**
- 3 That this plan, also as a matter of urgency, considers and resolves the following matters of great relevance to transport in Western Sydney:**
 - **Reinstatement of both the South-West Rail Link as planned, and the North-West Rail link, including the possibility that the North-West link could be constructed as a CityRail line between Epping and Rouse Hill with an extension to the Richmond Line at Vineyard.**
 - **Commencement of construction of the North-West Rail Link from the Richmond Line. One option is for the North-West rail Link to be commenced as a spur line from the Richmond Line at Vineyard to Rouse Hill, with construction then to proceed from Rouse Hill and Epping. This would at least establish a rail service to the Rouse Hill Town Centre.**
 - **Inclusion of both projects as part of the State Government's bid to the National Infrastructure Audit. WSROC notes that neither project was included in the list of projects put to the Federal Government, which would**

mean that the State Government would be required to construct both the North-West and the South-West Rail Links entirely from its own resources.

- 4 That very careful consideration is given to the maintenance and development of Sydney's overall heavy rail network, and that great care is taken to ensure that any "metro" projects undertaken to enhance this existing system are not in fact prejudicial to its future function and viability.**

In relation to the above, it should be noted that planning for both the North West and South West rail alignments is well advanced and the environmental assessments have also been completed. This means that work could start on these projects almost immediately. If both the North-West and South-West rail links were constructed as CityRail extensions, the Government could then explore options involving the private sector to construct further metro lines in the region, including between the CBD and Epping and between Epping and Parramatta.

In terms of both the North-West and South-West rail links, it would be possible to commence construction, but delay completion. Whilst WSROC would prefer to see the lines constructed within the original timetable, a delay of 12 to 24 months would be reluctantly accepted. However, the mini-budget proposal to abandon the projects entirely or defer them indefinitely is strongly opposed by WSROC, the other organisations who joined with WSROC in writing to the letter to the Premier on this matter, as well as many other organisations, businesses, councils, communities and families in the region.

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