



**RESPONSE TO THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE ON
SYDNEY OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS
DISCUSSION PAPER**

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Sydney over the Next 20 Years Discussion Paper: WSROC Response

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1 INTRODUCTION

WSROC supports the objective of COAG's Future Strategic Planning of Capital Cities, "to ensure Australian cities are globally competitive, productive, sustainable, liveable and socially inclusive and are well placed to meet future challenges and growth."

To achieve these objectives will require integrated strategic planning, careful management and political will that have not always been demonstrated in the past at either level of government or by either side of politics. A failure to meet these objectives would have profound effects on the quality of life of Sydney's population, expected to reach close to five and a half million in the next twenty years.

WSROC welcomes the NSW Government's process of community consultation on its discussion paper *Sydney Over the Next Twenty Years*. As Western Sydney will be the source of most of Sydney's demographic and economic growth over that time, what happens in Western Sydney will be fundamental to the liveability of the entire city in twenty years.

2 KEY DIRECTIONS

The direction of *Sydney Over the Next 20 Years* will depend on the overarching approach and focus of the Government and other major stakeholders.

WSROC argues that there is a need to fundamentally re-think the structure of Sydney and the interplay of its major sub-regions. For obvious historical and economic reasons, Sydney's CBD has been the focal point of the city's (and the state's) economy and its social and cultural life to date. Yet the geographical and demographic centre of Sydney is in Western Sydney, specifically around Parramatta. Arguably the economic power house of Sydney is also Western Sydney, which with a GDP of \$85 billion a year, is bigger than Sydney's CBD. According to the Sydney Metropolitan Plan, Western Sydney's population is projected to grow by around 1 million over the next twenty five years, accounting for nearly 60% of the city's growth during that time, and bringing Greater Western Sydney's population to half of all of Sydney.

This carries a number of critical policy implications.

1. The health of the NSW economy will depend increasingly on the strength of the Western Sydney economy. Thus policy initiatives need to both strengthen its current manufacturing base (which is still the largest employer in Greater Western Sydney and the largest contributor to its GDP) and to aid the process of diversification into the professional service sectors and into new and emerging industries. The Government can lead the way by supporting such restructuring and by relocating more of its own agencies and departments to key Western Sydney centres such as Parramatta, Penrith and Liverpool (see below).
2. Without concerted policy effort, Western Sydney's job deficit will continue to grow. With a current work force of 903,000 and 721,000 jobs in Western Sydney, the deficit is currently 182,000. With a projected workforce of 1,395,000 by 2036, and jobs of 1,105,000 (Metro Plan; Penrith Business Alliance *Western Sydney Employment Lands Investigation Area, May 2012*) the deficit will grow to 290,000. This will necessarily impact on the lifestyle and cost of living of Western Sydney residents who already travel further to work and spend more time commuting than the average Sydney commuter. Planning, especially for Western Sydney, must incorporate employment-generating development with residential development and the necessary transport linkages.

3. The extra 108,000 travelling outside western Sydney to access employment, in addition to those travelling within Western Sydney, will add massively to the pressures on Sydney's already congested transport system. It would mean approximately another 100,000 cars on the major motorways, another 1,500 buses or another 100 trains in peak times and if the bulk of these involve travel to and from the CBD, the result would be unsustainable. Clearly this would require massive infrastructure investment and would also seriously threaten the viability of Sydney's transport system. It would also carry significant external economic costs. Road congestion alone for Sydney is projected to rise from \$4.6 billion a year in 2009 to \$7.8 billion a year by 2020 (Bureau of Transport Economics in the *Metropolitan Strategy Review* p15).

In short, the long term sustainability and liveability of Sydney requires a refocussing that not only recognises and addresses the challenges but capitalises on the vital role of western Sydney. If the economic and employment base of Sydney is not significantly moved towards Greater Western Sydney, no amount of investment in transport infrastructure aimed at moving much higher numbers daily from the western suburbs to the CBD will be enough. The viability of Sydney's transport system will be seriously threatened, the productivity of Sydney's businesses will be reduced and the growth of the city's economy will be retarded. The importance of this cannot be stressed enough.

Three related points need to be made.

1. This again emphasises the need for Sydney's planning to not only be strategic, but also to be integrated. The needs of Sydney over the next two decades will not be met by separate unconnected planning by individual departments. Housing, transport and employment need to be planned concurrently in a way which takes into account the fundamental interconnections between them. Planning in departmental silos will not only fail to do the job, but will exacerbate the current problems.
2. Implementation is every bit as essential as planning. Implementation strategies must be embedded in the planning process and these also need to be place-based rather than department-based. Implementation as well as planning must be integrated in a way that pulls together all departments and agencies to ensure the delivery of strategic plans. This particularly relates to the provision of the necessary infrastructure across different agencies. For key development projects this may require the creation of a supra-departmental development authority to ensure the necessary coordination and implementation.
3. The process must include genuine on-going consultation with the affected local governments during both the planning and implementation stages. At least in the regional planning stage, this could include an enhanced role for the ROCs. The Western Sydney councils are in a key position to understand the impacts of projected growth on the region and are the ones who will be at the forefront of dealing with the issues. Their input is critical.

3 KEY COMPONENTS

WSROC's response to the following eight categories identified in the Discussion Paper is unapologetically focussed on Western Sydney. As already stated, developments in Western Sydney will impact heavily on the economic and social fabric of Sydney and its liveability in coming decades.

3.1 Housing Our Growing Population

As the Discussion Paper points out, the growth of 1.4 million in Sydney's population over the next twenty years will require an additional 570,000 homes. With 60% of the projected growth to be in Western Sydney, 60% of those homes will also need to be in the region. The affordability and location of this housing will determine the liveability, equity and sustainability of Sydney in coming decades.

(a) Affordability

Housing affordability has become increasingly difficult in Sydney and is a greater challenge than in any Australian capital. Between 1991 and 2011, Australian house prices increased by 263%, while after-tax income grew by only 95% (*Housing Australia Fact Sheet*, Shelter NSW). To buy an average Sydney home it currently takes more than 8 times the average annual income compared to 5.6 times a decade ago. In 2011, 12 % of Sydney homebuyers and 25% of renters were experiencing housing stress, the figures being much higher for low and middle income earners. Eight of the ten worst areas are in Western Sydney (Property Observer 2012).

The Grattan Institute's VAMPIRE index - Vulnerability Assessment for Mortgage, Petrol and Inflation Risks and Expenditure (Francis Jane Kelly, *The Housing We'd Choose* June 2011) - shows clearly that the most vulnerable households are those in outer western Sydney and south-west Sydney.

A detailed analysis of the causes of housing affordability problems is outside the scope of this paper, but some basic observations can be made. One of the fundamental problems is the shortage of supply. With Sydney's demand for housing growing by around 25,000 a year and construction in recent years averaging around 18,000, the deficit has been growing by around 7,000 a year. The shortage of supply continues to put upward pressure on prices.

The full range of policy measures needs to be canvassed to remove the blockages to development and to increase the stock of housing, both private housing and public housing, in greenfield developments as well as in urban renewal areas.

These should at least include –

- exploring new systems of infrastructure financing and taxation which spread the costs more broadly;
- reducing the burden of state-based development charges and taxes which are significantly higher in NSW than in other states, but in a way which does not hinder local councils' ability to raise revenue through S94 contributions to cover specifically local infrastructure.
- improving the development approval process by reducing red tape and delays to development approval processes and ensuring that the Planning System Review achieves this;
- reforming the planning system to transfer public consultation to the strategic planning stage rather than the development application stage to prevent unnecessary obstruction to complying developments;

- as part of this, engaging the broader community in dialogue on the imperatives of increasing housing supply to remove resistance to urban consolidation and densification in older inner and middle ring suburbs;
- implementing policies to facilitate/mandate the amalgamation of fragmented ownership which currently deters development in existing urban areas (perhaps along the lines of the proposed Urban Growth NSW suggested for Parramatta Road);
- improving coordination across council borders and between state and local governments;
- increasing government investment in public housing;
- working with the Commonwealth Government and community housing providers to increase the stock of community housing.

WSROC notes the Government's establishment last year of an Affordable Housing Taskforce and urges the Government to consider the full range of measures to increase housing supply and housing affordability.

(b) Location

One of the critical questions regarding the provision of the required 570,000 homes is the spread between greenfield development and urban consolidation/densification, with profound effects on the sustainability and liveability of Sydney.

WSROC supports the 2036 Metropolitan Plan for Sydney's objective of locating at least 70% of new housing in existing urban areas. While Sydney's population density is higher than other Australian capitals, it is significantly less than most overseas cities of comparable size.

Such consolidation should be close to public transport networks. Specifically, WSROC supports The Metropolitan Plan's aim to locate 80% of all new housing within the walking catchment of existing and planned centres with good public transport links.

There are several benefits of a strong urban consolidation/densification bias in meeting Sydney's extra housing needs.

- i) As it is more likely to be closer to public transport services it will increase the use of public transport and reduce reliance on private motor vehicles. The resulting benefits include greater accessibility and reduced costs for travellers, increased utilisation and economies for the rail system, reduced traffic congestion and its associated social and economic costs, reduced energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, a more sustainable transport system and improved activity and health levels as more residents walk or cycle to access rail or bus services. While the evidence on this is mixed, much research shows that areas with higher residential densities and closer to public transport nodes experience lower vehicle kilometres per household. (G. Corpuz et al. *The Development of a Sydney VKT Regression Model*, 29th Australasian Transport Research Forum (see Point 6 below).
- ii) Consolidation and renewal close to public transport can reduce the effects of geographical and social isolation associated with urban sprawl. Access to a range of community services such as community health, early intervention services, primary health care, education and community centres is more difficult in low density outer

metropolitan areas such as Western Sydney where such services are less available than in eastern and inner Sydney suburbs. Mixed use medium and high density housing, particularly close to town centres, shopping services and transport, can increase access to such services. This is particularly important for socio-economic groups who are already disadvantaged such as the elderly, people with a disability and those who cannot afford private transport (see point 5 below).

- iii) A closely related benefit from well-planned urban renewal is the potentially improved public health effects. Specifically, urban design affects the “walkability” of suburbs and neighbourhoods and therefore impacts on exercise levels and health. This is a result both of increased housing density and of the mixture of development. Urban renewal/consolidation developments have greater potential to yield these benefits than typically dispersed greenfield site developments, at least of the type mostly seen to date (see Point 5 below).
- iv) Urban renewal and consolidation is ultimately more environmentally sustainable than greenfield development and urban sprawl. Impacts on air quality, carbon emissions, vegetation clearing and habitat loss, land degradation, heat island effects and micro-climate all have the tendency to be greater with urban sprawl and greenfield development than well planned urban renewal and consolidation (see Point 6 below).
- v) Urban consolidation produces less threat to Sydney's peri-urban agriculture than greenfield development and is imperative if Sydney's projected population growth is not to seriously increase that threat. Inexorable urban sprawl in recent decades has seen a steady decline in productive agricultural land in the Sydney basin and identified growth areas contain extensive areas of Sydney's productive agricultural land (see Section 7 below).

Each of these impacts will be discussed more fully below, but each gives weight to a bias in favour of urban consolidation over greenfield site development and urban sprawl for the bulk of Sydney's new housing needs.

A recent study by the Centre for International Economics (*The Benefits and Costs of Alternate Growth Paths for Sydney* Dec 2010) concluded that higher density significantly reduces the environmental, social, transport and infrastructure costs of development. It estimated that for the aggregation of these costs, compared to the Metropolitan Strategy's 70/30 target, a 90/10 scenario would cost \$2,145 billion less until 2036 whereas a lower level of consolidation with only 50% infill and 50% greenfield development would cost an extra \$3.276 billion over that time.

While most new housing in Sydney over the past decade has been in existing areas, the continuing shortage of new housing suggests that the barriers to renewal are still too high to encourage the scale of urban renewal needed to improve housing affordability in more accessible areas. The growing disparity in prices between the majority of more accessible inner and middle ring suburbs and those in outer suburbs would tend to confirm this.

“Most importantly, for our low value middle suburbs, where 100,000 new dwellings will be needed in the next twenty five years, the market is unlikely to deliver socially acceptable or sustainable outcomes at prevailing values and within current planning frameworks without assistance.” (Prof. Bill Randolph, *Socially Inclusive Renewal in Low Value Suburbs: A Synopsis of Issues and an Agenda for Action* UNSW City Futures Research Centre, 2008).

In addition to the factors affecting housing development and affordability generally, a number of challenges make urban renewal difficult, particularly for renewal in lower income suburbs where returns may not be high enough to attract investment.

These include:

- fragmentation of land and strata title blocks
- the potentially high purchase price of such properties and doubtful financial viability
- the lack of co-ordination across council jurisdictions
- potential conflicts between profit maximisation and open space and community amenity requirements
- lack of co-ordination and differing objectives of state and local authorities

Effective urban renewal and consolidation requires strategic government leadership that brings together planning policy and housing policy and includes key stakeholders – local councils, public housing authorities, private investors and relevant community organisations.

This needs to at least include the following key components outlined by UNSW's City Futures Research Centre (Randolf, op cit.):

1. Local urban renewal strategies must take a “whole of government” approach which considers housing, social amenity, employment and local amenity issues.
2. Local government planning will need to be proactive and will need to be given the flexibility to identify opportunities for renewal and rezoning and to set locally suitable development guidelines.
3. A coordinating agency such as an “Urban Renewal Trust” will be required to bring the public and private sector resources together, to undertake the necessary land and property acquisitions and to manage the resulting developments and publically owned property assets.
4. Funding arrangements will need to be configured in a way that maximises private sector investment, appropriately shares public and private risk, and ensures long term amenity and local infrastructure and service provision.

While WSROC agrees that at least 70% of Sydney's housing growth needs to be in existing areas, it is important to add that not just any type of densification will do and that urban design features must be deliberately directed towards maximising its benefits.

It is imperative that this urban renewal is well considered and does not merely create more of the “...outcomes of forty years of knuckleheaded urban consolidation – street after street of 3-4 storey gun-barrel walk-ups.” (Prof. Bill Randolf, op.cit.).

To reap the maximum benefits it must-

- be focused near effective public transport networks whose capacity can be readily increased to meet the extra demand
- provide a genuine mix of housing types and avoid the loss or displacement of existing acceptable affordable housing

- avoid concentrations of the social disadvantaged
- incorporate good design features which maximise social amenity, green space and aesthetic appeal to attract a range of buyers and renters
- include higher quality housing to be attractive to upwardly mobile households
- be integrated with commercial renewal and retail/business/professional activities that provide high quality local jobs
- incorporate a range of essential community services

3.2 Providing Jobs and Economic Opportunities

Employment issues are critical in the planning for Western Sydney's future.

There are two components to this: first, employment numbers and second, employment types.

1. According to the Metropolitan Plan, Sydney will need an estimated extra 760,000 jobs over the next twenty five years. Western Sydney will need over 450,000 of these if its job deficit is not to worsen. On current trends the projected job deficit in Greater Western Sydney is expected to increase from 182,000 to 290,000 over the next twenty five years (Metropolitan Plan, Penrith Business Alliance).

The challenge for the Metropolitan Plan is twofold-

- i) Undertake initiatives which close the existing job deficit.
- ii) Ensure the generation of sufficient jobs to prevent the job deficit worsening.

As stated above, the failure to provide these jobs will place massive extra pressure on our transport system in a way which will affect not just Western Sydney, but the whole of the Sydney region. It is imperative, therefore, that a concerted effort is undertaken to generate adequate employment in Western Sydney for its growing population.

As the recently released ALGA *State of the Regions 2012-2013* report by National Economics, argues, "...job decentralisation... still holds the key to affordable housing and commuter transport costs."(p26)

The three main locational components of employment are designated employment lands such as traditional industrial areas, newer business parks and warehousing/ logistics centres; major commercial and retail centres; and dispersed employment.

The current and projected breakdown of these components is as follows:

	Strategic Centres	Employment Lands	Dispersed
2006 Western Sydney	24%	37%	39%
Sydney Region	39%	23%	38%
2036 (projected) Western Sydney Region	29%	47%	24%
Sydney Region	42%	28%	30%

(Sydney Metropolitan Plan p133)

The clear trend from these projections is the increasing concentration of employment in strategic centres and designated employment lands. This is even more marked for Western Sydney than for the whole of the Sydney region.

The generation of employment in existing urban centres has the big advantage of providing jobs close to public transport hubs and reducing reliance on private motor vehicles, which is why the 2010 Metropolitan Strategy Review aims "... to ensure most new housing and jobs are located near public transport." While market forces may provide incentives for commercial activities in these centres, government policies have a part to play. This will require:

- Greater cooperation between the State Government and local councils and developers to remove impediments and facilitate redevelopment;
- As part of this, consideration of a greater role for JRPPs to remove some of the roadblocks to strategic regional developments;
- Assistance through concessions on stamp duty, payroll tax and other charges for strategically important developments;
- Other Government measures to provide greater certainty for investors, such as the Government's recent announcement of its intention to remove restrictions to leasing pre-commitment;
- Applying this by the appropriate pre-commitment of Government agencies to relocate significant numbers of their own staff to designated key Western Sydney commercial centres particularly Parramatta, Liverpool and Penrith but also to other centres in Western Sydney.

In addition to the focus on existing, commercial centres, employment generation will require an increased focus on employment lands. As Sydney RDA concluded, "from our analyses, the jobs achieved in strategic centres and through natural growth will not meet the necessary employment targets and there will be a reliance on employment land to provide between 36% and 43% of the future jobs growth. Implementation efforts are essential". (Regional Development Australia Sydney, *Employment Lands Policy Position 2012* p.2).

As the figures above show, these are the areas that will generate the greatest increase in employment over the next twenty years, especially for Western Sydney. WSROC welcomes the Government's commitment to the Employment Lands Development Program but it will still leave a shortfall. A more determined approach is needed to ensure an adequate supply of zoned, serviced land which can support local jobs.

Assuming a gross employment density of 30 persons per hectare, this would require 17,333 ha to provide for the 520,000 jobs targeted for employment lands by 2036. (Penrith Business Alliance/Cox Richardson, Western Sydney Employment Land Investigation Area, May 2012). With a total of 10,500 ha designated Zoned Employment Land (of which 7,429 is developed) and 3,312 ha designated as "Future Supply" under the 2010 ELDP, this leaves a shortfall 3,521 ha of employment lands, or a shortage of 106,000 jobs, even if all "Future Supply" and "Undeveloped Zoned Land" is developed during that time.

Thus two imperatives must be addressed. Firstly, every effort must be made to facilitate the development of "Undeveloped Zoned Land" and "Future Supply" categories of land. This requires the provision of necessary infrastructure including water, sewerage and power as well as the necessary road and transport infrastructure to ensure this land is market-ready. A coordinated whole-of-government approach is needed to make sure this happens.

Secondly, every effort needs to be made to zone, service and develop the 3,500 - 4,000 ha in the Western Sydney Employment Lands Investigation Area in south-west Sydney. Assuming again an employment ratio of 30 per ha, this has the potential to accommodate between 105,000 and 120,000 more jobs.

It is worth noting that in Western Sydney there is less than 1,000 ha of zoned and serviced employment land available for use, which based on a consumption of 300 ha per annum, only provides a three year supply ready-to-be-developed land (Implementing the Metropolitan Plan : Planning Principles for Industrial Lands p5). Given necessary lead-in times, efforts must be commenced immediately to provide the land needed to support the required jobs growth.

WSROC supports the recommendations of the Sydney RDA that:

“Employment lands are so critical to the economic future of Greater Western Sydney that the government should adopt an agreed Vision and Strategy for delivering over 8,000 ha on a rapid release program;” and

in order to overcome the departmental “silo mentality”, that “the Minister for Western Sydney (The Hon Barry O’Farrell MP) establishes an ‘Implementation Committee’ for employment lands, reporting to a nominated Minister & chaired by an independent professional from the commercial sector to facilitate employment land supply in NSW.” (Regional Development Australia Sydney, Employment Lands Policy Position, 2012).

With both sides of politics ruling out an airport at Badgery’s Creek, the Commonwealth owned land there has potential use for employment generation. As the recently-released *Joint Study on Aviation Capacity in the Sydney Region* noted, “Given the time frames and the current planning of the adjacent areas, the best use of the site is for a majority of the land (at least 60 per cent) to be as employment lands with agribusiness in the short term and more manufacturing/industrial in the medium to longer term.” (p332)

A critical related issue is the need for supporting regional transport links. Even if serviced land is available, businesses will not relocate if transport links are not available to guarantee ready supply of inputs, ready access to markets and access for employees. This not only includes major infrastructure like the M7 and M4 but also the development of strategic link roads connecting employment lands to those motorways.

Closely related to this is the need for a fully developed and integrated freight system which incorporates essential rail links, including the Southern Sydney Freight Line with strategically placed intermodals to facilitate the development in those employment lands.

As well as addressing immediate and medium term transport priorities, it is imperative that long term planning takes place for future development needs. This means identifying

and quarantining corridors for future growth. (More will be said on transport in the next section.)

2. The second aspect of Western Sydney's employment needs which must be addressed is the mix of employment. It is not just a matter of ensuring the provision of sufficient jobs for the region's projected population growth, but it is a matter of ensuring the right type of jobs.

There is a real need to diversify Western Sydney's employment base. Currently Western Sydney is seriously under-represented in professional employment opportunities, providing only 17% of Sydney's banking, finance and business services jobs, but almost 60% of its manufacturing jobs (RDA Sydney Regional Plan for Sydney 2010). Over 30% of all western Sydney's jobs are in manufacturing, retail, construction, transport and warehousing. Because many of these industries are more subject to economic downturns and/or competition from overseas, exacerbated by the high Australian dollar, Western Sydney employees are more vulnerable to the threat of unemployment. Further, the comparatively low number of high level tertiary standard jobs means that a larger proportion of the region's highly qualified tertiary graduates must look outside the region to access suitable employment.

Business and professional jobs need to be attracted to suburban centres in Western Sydney to provide a better range of employment opportunities for its residents. While the Government can't force private enterprise to locate in the region, it can assist in providing the environment that encourages this. The Government can also support the development of new high technology and environmental industry clusters, such as the UWS/Penrith Council/ Penrith Business Alliance Health and Education Business and Innovation Campus, located close to where workers live and close to existing public transport infrastructure.

The Government can also lead the way by relocating more of its own departments and agencies to Western Sydney particularly to the designated regional cities of Parramatta, Liverpool and Penrith. A larger presence of public sector professional employment would attract a range of commercial private sector support services, moving these centres closer to the critical mass where professional and commercial services become self-generating.

WSROC endorses the acknowledgement in the Discussion Paper that "We must support strong growth in western Sydney with policies to achieve an appropriate scale and mix of job opportunities for Western Sydney."

However, this needs to be more than words: it needs to be supported by effective policy measures to ensure it happens. An important ingredient to achieving this is the need for strategic milestones against which progress can be measured. The target of an extra 490,000 jobs over the next twenty five years (just to avoid Western Sydney's employment gap worsening) cannot be left merely as a vague long term goal. Without measurable, staged targets for each of the existing commercial centres and each of the existing and new employment lands, it is unlikely to be achieved.

Actionable policies need to be directed towards achieving pre-determined, staged goals in each key area and the results need to be measured against those targets. If they are not being achieved, policies need to be changed to ensure they are reached. As discussed

above, the failure to generate sufficient jobs in Western Sydney has implications not just for Western Sydney residents, but for Sydney's transport system and the liveability of the whole city.

3.3 Providing Efficient Transport Networks

WSROC strongly supports the Discussion Paper's statement that "...it is not practicable or equitable to expect everyone to have to travel to a single CBD." Sydney's transport planning must provide for a very different demographic, geographic and economic structure of Sydney in twenty years' time. As argued above, planning must account for and support strong employment growth in Western Sydney, particularly focused around key centres such as Parramatta, Liverpool and Penrith. A growth model which has another 1 million people in Western Sydney but tries to transport the same proportion of them each day to Sydney's CBD to work, is simply not sustainable. The solution to Sydney's "transport problem" is largely an employment solution. Jobs must be created closer to where people live in order to reduce their transport needs.

Within that context, the following should be key priorities in planning Sydney's transport strategy for the next twenty years.

1. *A Transport System To Support Employment Growth.*

This "employment solution", requires transport (and other) infrastructure which supports the generation of jobs in Western Sydney. The economic growth of Western Sydney requires an effective and efficient transport system which encourages business. Business will only locate where they can be readily connected to supply chains, to product markets and to the employment market and where supporting infrastructure is adequate. This requires-

- an integrated and effective freight transport network with strategically placed intermodal terminals;
- more effective rail freight networks linking ports and intermodals to key industrial centres;
- strategic link roads connecting industrial and employment lands to major motorways;
- public transport connections (at least public buses) into major employment lands;
- rapid transit public transport into commercial centres

2. *Greater Provision of Public Transport.*

A stated target of NSW 2021, A Plan to Make NSW Number One is to "Increase the proportion of total journeys to work by public transport in the Sydney Metropolitan region to 28% by 2016". The benefits include increased economies for the rail system, reduced traffic congestion and its associated social and economic costs, reduced energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, a more sustainable transport system and improved activity and health levels as more residents walk or cycle to rail stations or bus terminals.

The 2005 NSW Greenhouse Plan reported that in the last 30 years the total number of Australian cars grew three times faster than the population. In the last decade in Sydney the average vehicle kilometres (AVK) travelled grew more than twice as fast as the population. It is worth noting the uneven pattern of increased usage: while the total annual VKT for Sydney grew by an average of 2.3% a year over the past two decades, the

increase for south-west and outer west of Sydney was 23%, with a 10% decrease in inner and eastern Sydney. (WSROC, *Social Exclusion: The Transport Challenge in Western Sydney 2009 - Submission to the Independent Public Inquiry into Sydney's Long Term Transport Plan*). This can be attributed largely to strong population growth with increased urban sprawl in outer Western Sydney and the limited availability of public transport options in those areas.

Projections by the Australian Government indicate that car traffic levels in Sydney in 2020 will be 33% higher than they were in 2002 resulting from a combination of the projected population increase and an increase of 7.9% in average VKT. (Federal Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, *State of Environment 2006*)

Motor cars are a major contributor to air pollution, affecting both greenhouse gas levels and air quality through nitrogen oxides (over 70% from motor vehicle emissions) carbon monoxide and dioxide, ozone, photochemical smog and particulates. The geographical structure of the Sydney basin means that residents in Western Sydney, particularly south-western Sydney are the most affected by poor air quality.

As IPART noted, "There is considerable evidence that private cars impose substantial externality costs on the community in the form of environmental pollution, congestion and other such impacts. Therefore, by substituting for private cars, public transport creates an externality benefit associated with the avoidance of externality costs through having fewer trips made by private cars." (IPART *Review of CityRail Fares 2009-2012 Final Report*)

Based on figures from the Bureau of Transport Economics, the Metropolitan Strategy Review estimates that the cost of traffic congestion for Sydney will rise from \$4.6 billion a year in 2009 to \$7.8 billion a year by 2020. A 2005 study commissioned by the Sydney Morning Herald (*Sydney's Transport Infrastructure – The Real Economics, Centre for International Economics, 2005*) projected a 30% increase in accident costs, road subsidies and greenhouse gas emissions from \$4.75 billion to \$6.1 billion a year.

3. *Public Transport Across Western Sydney.*

The inadequacies of public transport are felt even more keenly in western Sydney than in the rest of the city.

Investment in transport infrastructure in Western Sydney has not kept up with population growth. The rail network in Western Sydney has not been significantly expanded since the 1930s yet the region's population is now five times the size it was then. The result is that residential growth has been pushed further and further from rail networks, with an increasing reliance on buses and private cars. Yet bus services, either private or public have not kept up and have not been adequately integrated with rail services. In Western Sydney 60% of all trips are cross-regional but north-south public transport is almost non-existent for most Western Sydney residents and road systems are also, in many cases, grossly inadequate.

This produces the intolerable situation that residents in some of Western Sydney's towns who need to travel to other centres within the region by public transport must make ridiculously long (and costly) journeys. For example, someone living in Richmond and

working in Penrith who doesn't have a car must catch a train from Richmond to Blacktown and then back to Penrith. The same problem applies to someone living in Penrith and working in Liverpool or Campbelltown.

Investment in public transport infrastructure for Greater Western Sydney must improve north-south travel within the region, particularly in the outer suburbs, while still improving travel to and from the CBD as well.

In terms of public transport, infrastructure priorities must include:

- rapid completion of the South West Rail Link
- commencement of the North- West Rail Link, with an extension to the Richmond line
- duplication of the Richmond line
- Parramatta-Epping rail link, either heavy rail or light rail
- additional bus transit-ways including Parklea – Castle Hill
- a network of strategically placed north-south public bus services
- improved transport interchanges and car parking facilities at strategic rail stations
- investigation of a proposed light rail network linking key centres in Western Sydney

The other effect of inadequate public transport in the region is that most Western residents are forced to rely on private motor vehicles.

The high levels of car ownership in the region, coupled with the dispersion of employment opportunities and facilities and services contribute further to transport stress, the cost of living and the socio-economic disadvantage faced by many of Western Sydney's residents.

Research by UWS shows that 58.2% of the people living in transport disadvantaged areas are located in Western Sydney, with older people, those on lower incomes, and people with a disability among the groups most at risk.

Of the over 800,000 journeys to work commenced in Greater Western Sydney around 65% also have their destination in Western Sydney. Over 75% of Western Sydney workers commute by car and only 13% use public transport, so improving the efficiency of the road network is also critical for Western Sydney residents.

For the large and growing number forced to use private motor vehicles, particularly for the daily commute, it is imperative that the capacity of key motorways is increased. The highest priorities must be the M4 east and the M5 duplication. The congestion on the M4 and M5 make travel times from Western Sydney intolerable, and as explained above, add significantly to the cost of travel, air pollution and Sydney's carbon footprint and detract considerably from Sydney's productivity. The projected population increase for Western Sydney will massively exacerbate these problems.

4. *Improved Transport Interchanges:*

Evidence indicates that the quality or lack of quality of interchange facilities at stations can significantly affect the usage levels of public transport.

RailCorp's analysis of the modes of transport used by CityRail customers to access its railway stations shows that 46% walk, 12% arrive by bus, 14% drive and park and 17% are dropped at stations as private vehicle passengers ("kiss and ride"). (A Compendium of CityRail Travel Statistics, RailCorp June 2008.)

Therefore, "Interchanges can promote access to the public transport network with good waiting environments and fast transfers. But poor interchanges with long walks, stairs, poor travelling information and poor weather protection can substantially discourage access to public transport." (NSW Audit Office, 2007, Connecting with Public Transport)

Thus WSROC recommends targeted investment in interchanges, particularly at strategic rail stations, as a means of encouraging greater use of the rail system. Stations easily accessible from major roads and with ample low-cost land should provide substantial parking facilities to encourage "park and ride" commuting and all stations should be designed to facilitate "kiss and ride" usage. At many stations interchanges need to be improved to facilitate passenger transfer from buses to trains.

Investment also needs to address issues of safety and security, general appearance, cleanliness and amenity, adequate lighting, accessibility, the availability of weather protection, convenient signage and secure bicycle storage.

The provision of more car parks at strategic major bus stops would encourage park and ride commuting between outer suburbs and major centres. These options should be expanded for the most congested parts of major routes between Sydney's west and the CBD as well as centres such as Parramatta and Liverpool.

The use of bicycles for commuting in conjunction with public transport is very low in NSW compared with other states and territories, with combined bicycle/public transport accounting for only 0.6% of commuter trips at the time of the 2006 Census. However, these numbers are expected to grow and a stated aim of NSW 2021 is to "More than double the mode share of bicycle trips made in the Greater Sydney region, at a local and district level, by 2016."

The provision of secure and convenient bicycle parking facilities at stations is a prerequisite to encouraging multi-modal commuting, with the added advantage that "... parking space for bicycles etc., can be provided much more cheaply and efficiently than for cars, especially where land is expensive or restricted." (Independent Public Inquiry, Long-Term Public Transport Plan for Sydney Preliminary Report 2010)

While improved interchange facilities will not be the decisive factor for all who commute, improvements which make journeys more seamless will encourage greater use of public transport and the rail system in particular. If such facilities are not available, many will simply resort to using private motor vehicles for their whole journey.

5. *Construction of the South West Rail Link and the proposed North West Rail Link*

The construction of the SWRL and the proposed NWRL provides excellent opportunities to avoid the mistakes of the past. These two significant (and long overdue) projects should be prototypes of strategic planning by fully integrating rail corridor land use with the new infrastructure itself rather than allowing ad hoc, unplanned land use to occur in these crucial areas. This needs to be planned in such a way as to maximise its benefits by:

- providing medium density mixed housing, including affordable public housing, within walking and cycling distance of stations, with quality interchange facilities to maximise both the usage of public transport and active commuter access to that transport;
- attracting commercial activities to local centres near residential concentrations and transport links, thus increasing opportunities for local employment.

Effective mixed use development needs to be planned and encouraged rather than just hoping market forces will do the job. A necessary (but not sufficient) starting point is appropriate zoning and targeted land release policies to ensure that land use fits with State Government regional and sub-regional plans. The Government's current process of consultation with the ROCs is a promising start in terms of identifying regional priorities. However, it is also essential that local governments, both individually and through their respective ROCs are included early in the planning process so that acceptance for strategic priorities is achieved. This will help avoid problems which often occur when local communities pressure councils to oppose proposed Government infrastructure projects. Changes to the planning system must be made to allow this.

6. *Freight Transport*

Improving the flow of freight across NSW is an economic and social imperative. As nearly 30% of Australian containerised imports arrive through Port Botany before they are transported to other locations, most in Western Sydney, freight movement must be a key focus of Sydney's transport needs.

While Sydney's population is growing at a little over 1% a year, container volumes through Port Botany have been growing by 7.5% since its inception, reaching 2 million TEUs last year. Projections indicate that this volume will double within the next ten years and increase by 3.5 times within twenty years. Air freight volumes are projected to increase by 85% over the same time. (NSW Government, Port Botany and Sydney Airport Transport improvement Program, 2011). The impact on Western Sydney will be disproportionately high given the central role of the M5 and M4 in the east-west connections from these gateways and the growing concentration of industrial, warehousing and freight distribution networks in Sydney's west.

The economic cost of inefficient freight haulage, the wear and tear on major road infrastructure, the environmental and other external costs and the social cost of increasing numbers of heavy vehicles clogging Sydney's roads, particularly the M5, necessitate urgent action.

The key priority must be to increase the proportion of freight which is carried by rail rather than road. The Government's aim of doubling this proportion should be the bare minimum considering the low current base of only 14% (down from 22% ten years ago).

This requires the construction of efficient, high capacity intermodal terminals at strategic locations, particularly in Western Sydney, and the construction and/or upgrading of key rail linkages between those and Port Botany.

In addition, management measures are needed to increase the efficiency of existing road networks. Efforts must be made to reduce heavy freight traffic on major roads during peak

times. This might be assisted by differential time-variable tolling charges, and/or gate charges at ports and intermodal terminals.

7. *Long Term Corridor Planning.*

The rapid growth projected for Western Sydney means that even the medium term transport projects currently planned will be close to capacity, if not inadequate by the time they are built. Planning must occur now to identify corridors for future infrastructure requirements and importantly, to quarantine those corridors so they are available when required. A failure to do so could result in substantial future land acquisition costs, create massive obstacles to infrastructure investment and substantially reduce the benefit/cost of future projects. Key components of this must include provision for further north-south corridors including an outer Western Sydney motorway (perhaps along the Northern Road alignment, linking Campbelltown and Camden with Penrith and north to Richmond/Windsor) and extensions of the South-west Rail Link and the North-west Rail link with an eventual link up on the main Western line (perhaps at Werrington).

Corridor identification and quarantining must also include consideration of the route of an eventual high speed rail connection running north and south out of Sydney.

Regardless of the time frame of anticipated need for long term projects, if the preferred corridors are not identified now, subsequent development may render future infrastructure projects impossible.

3.4 **Providing the infrastructure We Need**

As the Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036 acknowledged, “... job opportunities, transport, appropriate and affordable housing and physical and social infrastructure are essential to achieving equity, liveability and social inclusion in a modern, global city like Sydney.”

Yet the provision of infrastructure in Western Sydney has not kept pace with population growth and residential development, despite the Metropolitan Plan’s commitment to providing infrastructure “...in a timely manner.”

As the University of Western Sydney points out, “Decades of under-investment of policy and fiscal resources in Western Sydney by successive State and Federal governments have left many of the region’s cultural, social and environmental needs unmet. The legacy of this undernourished development includes mounting social and environmental problems, including hardening pockets of poverty and social exclusion, a dwindling and fraying public sphere and ever increasing ecological stress.” (UWS) Western Sydney’s Urban Frontiers Program: A New Vision for Western Sydney – Options for 21st Century Governance, April 2002)

Necessary infrastructure, both transport infrastructure and social infrastructure must be provided concurrently with development not years, or decades later as has often been the case.

Question 3 above has already addressed the issue of transport infrastructure and specifically the transport infrastructure needs of Western Sydney. As identified in that section, transport infrastructure has failed to keep up with population growth and community needs in recent decades.

This has:

- added to traffic congestion and the associated economic costs
- reduced productivity and employment growth
- produced adverse environmental consequences including air quality and greenhouse gas emissions
- added to the cost of living of Sydney's already most disadvantaged communities
- increased the social exclusion and isolation of some communities.

As also explained above, addressing the transport disadvantage of Western Sydney is important not only for Western Sydney residents but has implications for the productivity and economic efficiency of the whole of Sydney.

In addition to transport infrastructure the provision of social infrastructure is equally important in determining the quality of life of local communities

Social infrastructure covers a range of facilities, some requiring investment in capital infrastructure backed up by a network of supporting services. The main areas of social infrastructure include:

- health services – both acute care and community health,
- individual, family and community support
- educational facilities;
- cultural facilities;
- sporting and recreation facilities;
- open spaces and parks;
- housing;
- community development;
- employment and training;
- legal services;
- public safety infrastructure ;
- emergency services; and
- public and community transport.

Clearly these have a profound impact on the liveability of local communities and affect a range of variables including their quality of life, equity, law and order, justice, social stability and cohesion, perceived and actual safety and security, social well-being , levels of physical activity and active recreation, engagement in cultural activities, levels of public health and educational standards.

The provision of adequate social infrastructure is a key determinant of equity between different communities and across Sydney. As discussed in the next section, serious inequities exist in the provision of health services and in educational outcomes.

In addition to social infrastructure such as hospital beds and GP services, which directly impact on health outcomes, many other aspects of social infrastructure also impact on levels of health. The provision of community health centres, nutrition and dietician services, early childhood intervention services, family support services, counselling services affect preventative health, levels of chronic disease and long term life outcomes, particularly for the disadvantaged members of our community.

Serious investment is needed in those areas of social infrastructure which will change lifestyles and help reduce levels of preventative illness and chronic disease.

As the National Health Prevention Strategy states, – “Primary health care reform is the single most important strategy for improving our health and making the health system sustainable.”

Investment in social infrastructure, apart from the key areas of health and education, is easily seen as less critical than “harder” infrastructure such as transport. However, its impact on quality of life, levels of social inclusion/exclusion, social cohesion, level of crime, lifestyle and preventative health warrant a higher priority. WSROC maintains that as well as transport, social infrastructure provision must be a central part of the planning process, to be fully integrated with residential development and provided concurrently with it. This requires a place-based approach to planning, rather than an uncoordinated departmental-based silo approach.

3.5 Providing Equitable Access to a Great Lifestyle

If the Discussion Paper’s aim of Sydney becoming “...a city where everyone ... is given a fair go , with equal access to the social, recreational and economic opportunities the city offers”, determined and co-ordinated policy action is needed to address the inequities that currently exist in a number of key areas.

1. Socio-economic Disadvantage

As the Discussion Paper, acknowledges “...eight of the ten most disadvantaged areas of Sydney are in Western Sydney.”

This situation is a product of a number of interacting factors including education, employment, family structure, disability and language difficulties.

As shown by the following figures, level of educational attainment are worse in Western Sydney than the rest of Sydney.

	Greater Western Sydney	Rest of Sydney
Year 12 or Better	42.1%	54.1%
Enrolled at University	9.4%	16.2%
University Degree	20.2%	28.6%

Employment levels are also worse, with average unemployment levels in Western Sydney around 1.5% higher than the rest of Sydney and pockets and with levels as high as 11%. Further, employment in Western Sydney is more concentrated in lower income areas such as manufacturing and retail than the rest of Sydney.

Language barriers are also more significant in Western Sydney with 35% of the region’s population being born overseas and in some LGAs, such as Fairfield (55%) and Auburn (60%), the rates are much higher.

A key focus of the Metropolitan Plan and the way ahead for Sydney must be to reduce the levels of socio-economic advantage in Western Sydney. As part of a range of policies, this should include:

- Greater investment in education, with a determined focus on addressing language and cultural barriers
- Specific programs aimed at increasing vocational education in schools and building better school-industry connections
- School-based programs aimed at increasing rates of tertiary entrance
- Policies to overcome Western Sydney’s transport disadvantage (see Section 3 above)
- Policies to increase employment and diversity of employment in Western Sydney(see Section2 above).

2. Housing

Housing affordability issues have a greater impact on low income households than on those with higher incomes. Over 10% of Australians are experiencing housing stress and by definition (lower-middle income families paying more than 30% of their household income on recurrent housing costs) the incidence will be greater amongst lower income earners (NATSEM: “Housing Stress in Australia 2007” University of Canberra, 2008). Thus the issue of access to affordable housing, either private or public, is a key one for Western Sydney.

As discussed above (Pt 1 Housing Our growing Population) a suite of measures is needed to increase the supply of housing, both public and private and to reduce the costs of buying a home. In addition to these across-the-board measures, targeted policies must require a component of affordable housing in every new development, both greenfield and in-fill. There is an urgent need for increased government investment in public housing to reduce the 60,000 on the state’s public housing waiting list. This should also include provision for those with mobility problems including the aged and people with disabilities.

3. Health

Western Sydney is also seriously disadvantaged in terms of health. This is partly a result of the socio-economic factors discussed above but also because of inadequacies in the provision of health services.

Average levels of obesity, poorer diets, sedentary lifestyles, diabetes, smoking, asthma, heart disease, malignant cancers and mental/behavioural problems are all more prevalent in low income households (ABS 2006 National Health Survey : Summary of Results 2004-2005). The consequence is higher mortality rates and lower life expectancy in the most disadvantaged areas. A study by NSW Health showed that across urban areas the average life expectancy for girls in the most disadvantaged areas was 7 years lower than for those in the most advantaged areas and for boys it was 10 years less. (NSW Health 2004 Health and Equity Statement: In All Fairness: Increasing Health Equity Across NSW.)

Poorer health outcomes are also a result of inequities in the provision of health services. On almost all indicators, access to health services is worse in Western Sydney than they are in the rest of Sydney.

	Greater Western Sydney	Rest of Sydney
Public hospital beds / 100,000	223.6	248.5
Number of residents per GP	1,049	754
Community Health facilities/100,000	1.67	1.98

(NSW Health (2010) NSW Health Services Data Book 2008/2009, <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au>

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing 2012, Primary Health Care Research and Information Service, Flinders University, SA)

Data on the MyHospitals website reinforces these results, showing that for the majority of surgical procedures waiting times are on average considerably longer in Western Sydney than they are in the rest of Sydney.

A commitment to equity demands that a concerted effort be made to improve access to health services for residents of Western Sydney.

As a minimum this requires-

- a widespread campaign on healthy living and preventative health, starting in our schools
- greater provision of primary health and early intervention services in Western Sydney
- considerable investment to reduce the backlog in hospital bed numbers in Western Sydney
- the provision of more internship places in public hospitals
- incentives to attract more GPs to practices in Western Sydney

4. *Social Isolation/Inclusion*

Not all development types provide equally for social inclusion and connectedness and not all regions of Sydney fare equally. Yet this is an important ingredient of social equity.

A focus on better urban planning can help to ameliorate or prevent some of the mistakes of the past where developments created geographical and social isolation leading to the range of social problems that often accompanies it.

An extensive literature review by UNSW found that:

“Research suggests that sprawling suburbs... undermine social capital. This is generally attributed to the increased distances between uses, overt reliance on private car travel and typically closed residential form... these factors reduce opportunities for interaction and result in feelings of disconnectedness and isolation.” (UNSW City Futures Research Centre, Healthy Built Environments, 2011).

On the other hand, mixed use development incorporating medium and higher density housing can reduce levels of isolation and build community connectedness by providing more opportunities for incidental contact and interaction.

“Mixed use development, if well planned and designed, has the potential to generate an interesting, vibrant atmosphere that brings people closer, increases social capital and social cohesion, addresses environmental issues and fosters economic development.” (Metropolitan Strategy Review - Sydney Towards 2036).

Carefully planned use of land close to existing transport corridors and nodes as part of an urban renewal program can help achieve this outcome. Importantly, it needs to include an integrated component of public housing, in order to help address issues of social disadvantage.

Further, the style of development has implications for public health. UNSW's Healthy Built Environments refers to several studies which "... indicate significant associations between sprawl and physical activity" (Feng et al.) and result in "... less utilitarian physical activity and higher obesity outcomes" (and Dunton et al.). Importantly, the UNSW research review goes on to show that it is not so much density per se but mixed use in association with density which is important.

This is because "Destinations give people a place to walk to. Replacing uniform urban form with a variety of uses can lead to shorter distances, thereby encouraging active forms of transport (UNSW, Healthy Built Environments: A Review of the Literature).

Mixed use activity will not happen on its own but needs to be encouraged by planning and other policy measures.

- As a prerequisite, zoning and LEPs need to be appropriate to allow varied uses, combining medium to high density housing with retail and commercial activities, community facilities and open spaces that create or retain amenity.
- The strategic location of government services can also provide a stimulus to attract other professional and commercial support services.
- Planning which creates open spaces with walkable streets, visually attractive buildings and "destinations" encourage walking and opportunities for casual contact.
- Planning should incorporate green spaces which help create a greater sense of well-being and relaxation and reduce stress and should also include public spaces for childhood play and recreation.
- Residential and transport planning which reduces commuter travel time allows more time for family, friends and social engagement.
- Local development planning should require designs which improve safety and perceptions of safety to encourage walking and increased use of public spaces .
- Planning must avoid concentrations of low SES communities which entrench social disadvantage.

It is worth noting the range of health effects of social connectedness compared with social isolation. An extensive literature review by WSROC found that increased social connectedness produces a number of significant health effects, including:

- better emotional health and well-being and mental health
- lower disease rates
- lower suicide rates
- less binge drinking and risk-taking behaviour
- less violent crime
- quicker recovery from illness

1 (A number of sources quoted in AGA Consulting *Greater Western Sydney Urban Development Health Impact Assessment*, WSROC 2007)

If Sydney is to be a city which provides "...equitable access to a great lifestyle" the issues of disadvantage in housing, health, social infrastructure and social connectedness need to be a high priority for government policy.

3.6 Protecting Our Environment and Building Resilience to Natural Hazards

As the Discussion paper acknowledges, "Sydney's growth and development... have resulted in a high ecological footprint, particularly relative to the rest of Australia." The impacts of this heavy footprint are felt across Sydney, but on a number of indicators, more so in Western Sydney. Further, the projected population growth over the next twenty years which will see 60% of the city's new population living in Greater Western Sydney, means that how we deal with that growth will have profound implications for the sustainability not only of Western Sydney, but of the whole city.

Several impacts need to be addressed as high priorities.

1. Efforts are needed to at least slow the rate of growth of motor vehicle usage and its impact, not only on greenhouse gas emissions but also on other pollutants.

Motor vehicles contribute approximately 7% of total greenhouse gas emissions (Australian Parliamentary Library How Much Australia Emits), up to 70% of nitrogen oxides, and are a major contributor to photochemical smog and ozone. The geographical structure of the Sydney basin means that residents in Western Sydney, particularly south-western Sydney are the most affected by poor air quality. Residential developments which reduce the dependence on private motor vehicles should help reduce the growth in these pollutants.

As indicated above, projections by the Australian Government suggest that car traffic levels in Sydney in 2020 will be 33% higher than they were in 2002 resulting from a combination of the projected population increase and an increase of 7.9% in average vehicle kilometres travelled. This will bring with it significant impacts in terms of carbon emissions but also other air pollutants.

As IPART noted: "There is considerable evidence that private cars impose substantial externality costs on the community in the form of environmental pollution, congestion and other such impacts." (IPART Review of CityRail Fares 2009-2012 Final Report 2008).

Amongst a range of necessary policy responses there are three clear imperatives.

The first is to ensure that planning is focussed as much as possible on urban consolidation along existing public transport corridors. Where it involves greenfield development this must as far as possible be close to existing public transport links or where they can be relatively easily provided.

The second is to improve public transport systems, particularly across Western Sydney where private motor vehicle usage is greatest and is growing the fastest.

The third, as discussed above, is the need to generate more employment near to where people live, thus reducing commuting distances and the associated environmental (as well as financial) costs.

2. Associated with this is the need to reduce the rate of land clearing, again with implications for greenfield developments versus infill development. Residential developments which

reduce the rate of urban sprawl will reduce the rate of land clearing, the removal of carbon sinks and threats to biodiversity through the removal of remnant Cumberland Plain woodland, listed as an endangered ecological community under the 1995 NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service identifies “Clearing for agriculture and urban development (as) the greatest threat to Cumberland Plain Woodland.” (NPWS website)

The establishment of the Western Sydney Parklands is a welcome initiative. While it is accepted that these Parklands carry a range of uses, including commercial activities, and while it is understood that the Charter of the Parklands require them to be self-funding, it is important that the environmental integrity of the Parklands is maintained and that remnant Cumberland Plain bushland within these Parklands is protected.

3. Climate change issues and the potential impacts of rising temperatures should be integral to government planning across the range of portfolios. This involves a range of issues outside the scope of this submission, but including factors such as the efficiency of energy production, support for abatement measures by Sydney’s manufacturing industry, increasing efficiencies in major transport modes, energy savings in government agencies, etc. The Sydney Adaption Strategy which is being prepared by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in conjunction with the Office of Environment and Heritage and SCCG and WSROC is working on a range of strategies to reduce Sydney’s vulnerability to a range of extreme weather events including extreme heat days, bushfires and flooding which may result from climate change. These strategies should be included in Sydney’s long term strategic planning.

Of perhaps more direct and immediate local impact is the need to ensure development and planning policies focus on the impacts of the nature of the built environment on micro-climate. Regardless of possible impacts of climate change, rising temperatures and heat island effects have been impacting significantly on Western Sydney because of the nature of development in recent decades. Since 1965 Western Sydney has experienced almost a 200% increase in the number of days over 35°C while the city itself has only experienced a 22% increase (Greening Australia). While this difference is largely due to the moderating effects of coastal locations, the impact in Western Sydney has been exacerbated by land clearing and the replacement of vegetation with hard surfaces such as buildings and roads. Planning for population growth and future development needs to minimise the loss of vegetation and needs to give careful consideration to the types of surfaces created and materials used as well as to the development of heat sinks through the creation of ample green spaces and waterways, riparian zone revegetation and rehabilitation of degraded landscapes.

4. Projected population growth and developments, particularly in the south-west growth sector will impact on the already degraded Hawkesbury –Nepean catchment. The high nutrient levels, particularly phosphates and nitrates, partly as a result of stormwater runoff and run-off from agriculture, but more from the treated effluent from the large number of sewerage treatment plants in the catchment, have seriously affected the water quality in the river. Apart from health implications, this has at time created significant problems with extensive aquatic weed infestations with impacts on the local tourism industry and on downstream aquaculture. “Elevated nutrient levels and reduced river flows are the two major factors contributing to algal blooms and excessive aquatic weed

growth, which hamper recreation and commercial uses of the river and affect aquatic life.” (*Lower Hawkesbury Nepean Nutrient Management Strategy*, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water 2010).

The impact of a large increase in housing within the catchment cannot be completely avoided, but a number of measures are required as a minimum, particularly to reduce the level of nutrients entering waterways which is identified as a priority in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Action Plan and River Health Strategy.

- The implementation of an integrated catchment-wide framework to prioritise and coordinate policies to reduce nutrient flows
- Co-ordinated work with the agriculture industry to reduce farm-based nutrient run-off
- Measures to reduce stormwater run-off into the river system
- The implementation of a regime of environmental flows from dams and major weirs
- Measures to ensure that all STPs within the catchment are upgraded to maximum efficiency
- Measures to significantly increase the total volume of recycled water within the catchment but also throughout in Sydney to reduce the pressure on flows in the river.
- Measures to ensure the minimisation of land clearing and the removal of vegetation
- Strategic riparian zone revegetation in degraded areas.

Most of these measures also need to apply to the Sydney catchment system. The Parramatta River and the Georges River catchments, both included in the responsibilities of the Sydney Metropolitan Sydney Catchment Authority cover large parts of the Sydney basin and include significant parts of Western Sydney. Issues such as resource conservation, protecting vulnerable ecosystems and biodiversity, reduction in invasive species, ensuring water quality, recycling, stormwater management and runoff have an impact on the environment throughout the Sydney basin.

Support for the HNCMA and the SMCMA and their catchment action plans is essential to minimising our ecological footprint and ensuring the sustainability of Sydney over the next twenty years.

3.7 Protecting Productive Rural and Resource Lands

Inexorable urban sprawl in recent decades has seen a steady decline in agricultural land in the Sydney basin.

While changes in statistical methodology make it hard to obtain conclusive figures, best estimates are that the area under agriculture in the Sydney basin has diminished from around 100,000 ha in 1994 to 82,000 ha in 2007 (UWS Urban Research Centre, *Sydney’s Agricultural Lands : An Analysis*, 2010). This is prime agricultural land and needs to be preserved for several reasons:

- In all, the value of Sydney’s agriculture is estimated at around \$1.5 billion with multiplier effects of probably two to three, making an important contribution to the Sydney economy.

- Sydney's peri-urban agriculture is an essential component of Sydney's food supply. The Sydney Metropolitan region contains accounts for 2.5% of the state's land yet supplies 20% of NSW's vegetables. With future uncertainties about possible climate effects on drier inland parts of the state, Sydney's food security requires that Sydney basin output is retained, if not enhanced.
- This is highly productive land. The intensity of agricultural production has seen returns per hectare in the Sydney Basin of \$5,433, dramatically higher than the state's average of \$136/Hectare (Knowd, et al, 2006, Urban Agriculture: The New Frontier p7).
- Access to locally grown food has the important benefits of freshness and relative cheapness (because transport costs are lower) and will be more likely to encourage healthy eating.
- Because distances are shorter, environmental costs of transporting produce to markets are lower.

The NSW Metropolitan Strategy Review clearly identified threats to Sydney's agricultural land as a key issue, acknowledging that:

"...viable agricultural lands are facing continual pressures from alternative land uses and have a role in contributing to a sustainable future for Sydney. This is especially important given the expected population increases, projected housing needs, changing rainfall patterns and the increasing cost of transport." (Department of Planning, *Metropolitan Strategy 2005*).

Yet the commitment to such sentiments must be questioned when designated land release areas contain 40% of Sydney's most productive agricultural land and 50% of Sydney's identified vegetable farms are in the identified growth areas (NSW Department of Industry and Investment, *Ground Truthing the Sydney Vegetable Industry*, 2008).

The pressures on peri-urban agriculture come both from the demand side and the supply side. On the demand side is the continuing demand for greenfield sites for housing developments, spurred on by Sydney's growing population and the desire for at least a proportion of them for the traditional detached house on a quarter acre block, and by some for the semi-agricultural lifestyle on rural acreages on Sydney's outskirts. On the supply side, is the simple fact that agricultural activities rarely yield the returns that come with subdivision and residential development. For many farmers on Sydney's fringe, the potential for such development has often been seen as their future superannuation.

A suite of policies is needed to protect Sydney's valuable agriculture industry.

- A commitment to urban renewal and consolidation to provide the bulk of Sydney's extra housing needs would minimise the encroachment into productive farming land.
- Where greenfield developments are planned, every effort must be made to ensure that they do not occur in high productivity agricultural land. To the extent that the currently identified growth areas include considerable amounts of such land, these plans need to be revisited and changes made to ensure that Sydney's valuable agricultural resources are not so easily surrendered.
- The Government needs to develop a Food and Agriculture Policy for the Sydney basin, based on comprehensive mapping of existing and potential high value agriculture, which is fully

integrated with all other aspects of planning in order to ensure the protection of prime agricultural land.

- The State Government should work more closely with local Councils to develop more consistent approaches to agricultural zoning and development issues to ensure LEPs support agriculture.
- Consideration should be given to applying relevant parts of the SEPP (Rural Lands) to the Sydney Metropolitan Area to ensure greater Council consideration of rural impacts of development proposals. This would assist Local Government in resisting pressures to subdivide the most productive land.
- Simplification of the plethora of regulations applying to agriculture would reduce compliance costs and create greater certainty for agricultural activities.
- Improved communication with all new residents in farming areas (possibly with the issue of S149 planning certificates) regarding the rightful needs of farming practices would reduce potential misunderstanding and conflict over activities which residents might consider noisy, smelly or unattractive and would strengthen Councils' ability to resist pressure to curtail legitimate farming activities.
- Workable water sharing arrangements must ensure adequate supplies for irrigated horticulture such as market gardens.
- Support for local farmers' markets and farm gate marketing (including the removal of impediments to such) will help support the economic viability of local agriculture.
- Broader support through research, marketing, transport and taxation policies would also help improve the viability of this essential sector.
- Consideration could be given to a system of Transferable Development Rights which would allow farmers to capitalise on the increased value of their land while at the same time retaining parts of it for agriculture.

3.8 Connecting with the Regions

Efficient connections with Sydney are crucial to regional parts of the state, both because of the impact those connections have on regional economic activity and for their importance for access to a range of professional services (including medical services) and recreational and cultural activities located in Sydney.

Much regional economic activity is focussed on production for Sydney markets and/or export through Sydney. Thus the efficiency of vital freight transport connections is fundamental to their economic success. A number of points need to be made here.

1. The efficiency of operations through Port Botany, which accounts for around a third of all container movements into and out of Australia, is essential to maximising productivity and maintaining costs. The projected increase in container movements over the next decade underline the need for these efficiencies and the Government's commitment to the Port Botany Improvement Plan is a welcome step in planning to accommodate the increased volume.

In this context it is important to include the need to increase the capacity and efficiency of ports at Newcastle and Port Kembla and their potential to help reduce the pressure on Port Botany and its feeder rail and road network. Thus, support for the expansion and improvements being undertaken by the Newcastle Port Corporation and Port Kembla Port Corporation are important, the latter having implications for servicing south-western Sydney.

2. The capacity of Port Botany to deal with a rapidly rising container load depends heavily on the supporting road and rail infrastructure, and is restricted by its disproportionate reliance on the M5 and the inadequacy of the M5 and the M4. Plans to expand the western Sydney network of intermodal terminals are essential to improving the capacity of Port Botany and reducing freight impacts on the Western Sydney road network and Western Sydney communities.

However, two points need to be made in this regard. First, planning for intermodals needs to be long term, focussing on future growth areas and transport corridors. While some of the currently proposed developments such as Moorebank might provide attractive medium term solutions, long term solutions need to give serious consideration to more strategically located sites such as Eastern Creek. Second, where intermodals are planned, again, in locations such as Moorebank, serious attention needs to be given to full mitigation measures to minimise any disproportionate impact on local communities.

3. The development of effective freight rail links is an important ingredient in building connections between regional NSW and Sydney and supporting regional economies. This particularly requires a commitment to completing the south Sydney Rail Line and the North Sydney Freight Corridor. Investigation is also needed as a basis for long term planning for better rail links between western NSW and the eastern seaboard ports.
4. Road links between regional NSW and Sydney are still far from adequate.
 - a) While the F5 (Hume Highway) has seen significant improvements in recent decades, the critical connections at the Sydney end are still inadequate. Planned widening of the south-western end of the M5 motorway is welcome, but it will exacerbate many of the bottleneck problems without the M5 East duplication.
 - b) Critical connections from northern NSW to Sydney's road network are also missing. In particular, the M2-F3 connection is vital to improve the efficiency of road freight connections (as well as passenger connections) with northern regions.
 - c) Connections with the western hinterland are even more problematic. Improvements to the Great Western Highway are progressing far too slowly but even when they are complete, they will not provide the answer for road freight. The route of the Great Western Highway which passes through most Blue Mountains villages makes it entirely inappropriate and unsafe as a major freight corridor, despite the RMS claim that it will be "... a key freight route between Sydney and the central west of NSW". (RMS website).
 - d) Heavy vehicles currently comprise around 2,900 movements to the daily 24,000 traffic load across the Blue Mountains. In addition to the serious safety concerns of increased heavy vehicle flows, the constant speed zone changes and restrictions add

to transport costs and reduce the effectiveness of the route as an effective freight transport corridor.

These problems necessitate planning for an alternate route across the Mountains. While earlier studies such as the Central West Transport Needs Study (2009) concluded that a major upgrade of the Bells Line of Road corridor is not justified until the long term, work is currently being done on the Bells Line of Road Long Term Strategic Corridor Plan (a joint initiative of the New South Wales and Australian governments). It is essential that with community input, corridor identification and reservation occurs so a suitable motorway, connecting to Sydney's motorway network, can be constructed in the longer term when it is needed.

4 CONCLUSION

The eight focus areas identified in the Discussion paper cannot be viewed separately. They must be part of an integrated whole which fully understands the interrelationships between the key variable. Planning for residential development, employment generation and the necessary transport connections between them is fundamental to a productive and viable city with the growth projected for Sydney. The extent to which that planning incorporates social infrastructure and environmental impacts and agricultural practices will determine the city's sustainability, equity and liveability for future generations.

This planning cannot be a theoretical exercise. It must be backed by policy initiatives which support implementation that can be measured against critical milestones as a basis for further decision making.

As argued at the beginning of this submission, the future of Sydney in twenty years' time will be determined very much by what happens in Western Sydney, as this region will carry most of Sydney's growth during that time. It is imperative therefore, that planning and implementation focus much more rigorously on Western Sydney than they have in the past. WSROC and its ten member councils look forward to continuing opportunities to work with the government on these issues.