



## SUBMISSION

**WSROC Submission to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment  
on the role, powers and structure of the proposed Greater Sydney Commission**

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## 1. Introduction and background

### 2.1 About WSROC

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the proposed Greater Sydney Commission on behalf of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC).

WSROC represents ten councils in the Western Sydney region including Auburn, Bankstown, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Holroyd, Liverpool, Parramatta and Penrith. Together these councils provide planning and services for over 5,500 square kilometres, ranging from densely populated metropolitan areas to rural lands and the World Heritage Area of the Blue Mountains. The region's population is around 1.7 million and is expected to increase by almost 1.6 million over the next 20 years. The Western Sydney economy currently contributes around 95 billion annually to National GDP and is primarily driven by small to medium enterprises (around 94%).

Our councils face a range of challenges in providing adequate housing and jobs for their residents, but also offer countless opportunities for investment and economic growth. The new airport at Badgery's Creek will be a major catalyst for economic and social development across the region and its management must be carefully integrated with collaboration from all three tiers of government to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is provided in a timely way and the resulting development is integrated and coordinated to ensure the maximum benefits to the region.

### 2.2 WSROC's role in Sub Regional planning

Established in 1973, WSROC has a long and proud history in regional strategic planning, intergovernmental relations and advocacy. It has produced a number of ground-breaking regional strategic planning and policy documents including FutureWest and Future Directions as well as numerous reports around infrastructure funding, health services and job creation and workplace reform. Our 2015 NSW Election Issues brief is a foundation document for WSROC's policy analysis and positions across a range of issues, and corresponds with WSROC's own corporate strategy which defines planning, transport, infrastructure and employment as cornerstones of WSROC's advocacy and policy activities.

It is WSROC's view that local government will play a pivotal role in the future of Sydney and in creating the communities of the future. This is especially the case in Western Sydney which includes the designated North West and South West growth sectors and is responsible for providing jobs and housing for more than half the Metropolitan Strategy's projected population increase. WSROC's member Mayors and Council officers have met extensively with delegates from the Planning Department around how best to work together to deliver on the targets outlined in the *Metropolitan Strategy – A Plan for Growing Sydney* and WSROC believes local government representation must be included as a matter of course at the highest level to ensure that the process of building our city of the future is a truly collaborative and inclusive one.

## 2. The Greater Sydney Commission and Sub Regional planning

*The focus of this submission is to put forward a model for a strong governance framework for sub-regional planning under the NSW Government's A Plan for Growing Sydney. It proposes a model for collaboration between councils, the planned Greater Sydney Commission and the NSW Government in developing and implementing the new Sub-regional Plan for our region, as well as contributing to delivery of A Plan for Growing Sydney.*

Even though WSROC supports the initiative of sub-regional planning, we would strongly emphasise that issues such as employment and major Sydney infrastructure projects, such as Badgerys Creek and West Connex, cross sub-regional boundaries. We strongly suggest the Greater Sydney Commission's (GSC) governance structure make allowances for this. If this is done well, the Commission could play a critical role in reconciling the various plans impacting on the region, including Metro, Regional and Local Plans.

WSROC notes that it is currently unclear what powers of authority the Commission has if it does not have budget control. WSROC would like to see clarification regarding what levels of authority the Commission has in relation to organisations like RMS and Sydney Water who have significant budgets.

In WSROC's view there is need for careful consideration as to how the Commission interacts with – and compliments – other NSW organisations and initiatives such as the Committee for Sydney and other entities such as the Infrastructure NSW. We strongly advocate for these bodies to be reconciled.

Further, WSROC would also like to comment, that for the Commission to be successful, support from the highest level of the NSW Government is essential and WSROC would strongly suggest that the Commission report to the Premier, rather than a Minister, with timely annual reporting against KPI's being essential.

### **2.3 Structure and composition of the GSC and Sub-regional Local Government Advisory Committees**

Based on the briefings by the Minister and Department, it is considered there are three main options for involvement:

1. Elected representatives
2. Professional officers
3. Independent skills-based appointments.

WSROC believes that all three of these groups need to be meaningfully engaged in order to benefit from the widest range of experience, views and perspectives. An appropriate model may include:

- A Greater Sydney Commission – comprising agency directors and State Government appointees.
- Sub-regional Local Government Advisory Committees (SLGAC) consisting primarily of elected or nominated representatives with Council delegates being the Mayor, or Mayor's delegate.
- A second tier of technical 'working parties' providing support for the Commission and Sub-Regional Local Government Advisory Committees through senior officers groups of council and NSW Government Departments and agencies to provide advice to the elected representatives and manage the expected significant workload.

This framework reflects existing NSW and local government governance frameworks and provides a balance of elected representatives with responsibility for strategic planning in the interests of the community and professional officers with a wealth of strategic planning experience.

The current WSROC membership covers three designated Sub-Regional Areas – the Centre West, West and South West. The appointment of Mayors of each council to the relevant SLGAC would act as a strong foundation for the kind of regional advocacy and local representation envisaged under the recommendations of the Independent Panel for Local Government Reform.

### **2.4 Role and function of the Commission and the SLGAC**

The high level role and functions identified to date for the Greater Sydney Commission and the Local Government Advisory Committees suggest that: The key role for the Commission will be to oversee

implementation of *A Plan for Growing Sydney* (the Metropolitan Strategy) and to lead the development of the sub-regional plans.

Under these proposals, the primary role of the SLGAC is to assist the Commission in developing and delivering the sub-regional plans, which should incorporate both land use planning and details around timing and responsibility for delivery.

However WSROC believes that the Commission's primary role should focus metropolitan-wide issues and enabling appropriate growth through infrastructure delivery. They should also be responsible for coordinating the delivery of large scale catalytic infrastructure projects, such as Badgerys Creek airport, to ensure that it is fully supported and integrated with the city as a whole, not simply within a region or LGA.

It should be the role of the Sub-regional Committees to lead the development and delivery of the respective sub-regional plans, with the Commission retaining ultimate approval of those plans after development. Under this scenario, it would be the Local Government Advisory Committees should be empowered to have overall responsibility for:

- Overseeing the preparation of Sub-regional Plans from a sub-regional approach including identification of strategic land use and infrastructure priorities
- Monitoring the implementation of the Plan and reporting to the Commission on the performance of the sub-region and any issues in regard to targets, infrastructure and other identified matters
- Contributing where requested to sub-regional or regional planning initiatives, including consideration of proposals for rezoning of major precincts and structural plans and supporting local councils with the preparation of Local Plans
- Identifying and advising the Commission on strategic planning issues for the sub-region, with reference to council LEPs and Community Strategic Plans

## **2.5 Decision-making on the SLGAC**

Despite its primarily advisory role, the Sub Regional Local Government Advisory Committees will need to determine an appropriate decision-making process, with robust governance frameworks and formal delegations established and ratified as part of an agreed terms of reference. WSROC suggests a sound basis would be for the Committees to operate on a basis of mutuality with decisions made by consensus.

When consensus cannot be reached, recommendations to the Commission could be made by super-majority of 75% of delegates with any dissenting views noted and a referral to the Commission to resolve.

## **2.6 Interaction between the Greater Sydney Commission with the SLGAC**

To ensure effective representation of the Sub Regions, WSROC advocates for the Commission to engage with the sub-regions directly.

WSROC believes this to be the most appropriate model because it enables true representation of the interests of the region and reduces potential perceptions of favouring one council area over another. It would also assist in mitigating the risk of political concerns potentially detracting from the overall work of the Commission or the SLGAC.

In addition, consideration should be given for designated CBDs (Sydney and Parramatta) to have individual representatives on the GSC.

## 2.7 Working framework

The Department has now completed a series of Sub Regional planning workshops with local government and state agencies across each of the designated SRAs. This has given a welcome demonstration of the Department's intention to work collaboratively with senior council officers on the development of the Sub Regional plan, and in particular in identifying local challenges and obstructions to meeting targets. This approach is strongly supported as it aligns with the proposed Sub-Regional planning model above. It is considered the working framework on a Sub Regional basis should include the following:

### Individual Councils

- To provide input into the Sub Regional planning process via senior officers and elected delegates on Sub Regional Local Government Advisory Committees
- To be briefed on regular basis by senior council officers

### Sub Regional Local Government Advisory Committee Working Groups

- A working group to collaboratively develop draft Sub Regional plans and advise the Sub Regional Local Government Advisory Committee
- Senior council, NSW Government and ROC staff
- Working in conjunction with existing WSROC Planners group

### Sub Regional Local Government Advisory Committee

- Oversee the preparation and implementation of Sub-Regional Plans including identification of strategic land use and infrastructure priorities for recommendation to Commission (interim MAC)
- Briefed by representatives of Department of Planning and the SRLAC Working Groups on a regular basis through Sub Regional plan development and implementation process
- Monitor implementation of the Plan and report to the Commission on the performance of the Sub Region and any issues in regard to targets, infrastructure and other identified matters
- Provide advice on the process for community and stakeholder engagement
- Established using existing meetings of WSROC Mayors, Board and GMs, with Secretariat provided by WSROC or relevant member councils. As the WSROC membership covers three separate Sub=regions and as such it may be more effective for lead councils in each sub-region to provide secretarial support, e.g. Parramatta in the Central West, Penrith in the West and Liverpool in the South West.

### Greater Sydney Commission

- Approve Sub-Regional Plans, monitor implementation and resolve issues as required
- Oversee the integration of major catalytic infrastructure such as Badgery's Creek airport with the rest of the city in a metropolitan-wide approach
- Reconcile the various plans impacting on the region, including Metro, Regional and Local Plans.

## 3. Responses to the questions raised by the Department regarding the Greater Sydney Commission

The Department of Planning, Environment and Local Government in its briefing on the NSW Government's new Metropolitan Strategy - A Plan for Growing Sydney, the Greater Sydney Commission and the Sub Regional planning process advised it is seeking feedback on following questions:

*How do we best incorporate Sub Regional perspectives and local government expertise through membership of the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC)?*

Local Government representation on a Sub Regional basis on the Greater Sydney Commission is a central element of successful implementation of the *Metropolitan Strategy - A Plan for Growing Sydney*.

The best way to incorporate sub-regional perspectives and local government expertise through membership of the Greater Sydney Commission is to establish a framework based on the model outlined in this submission. This includes:

- A Greater Sydney Commission and Sub-regional Local Government Advisory Committees (SLGAC) consisting primarily of nominated or elected representatives.
- Proper engagement framework between the Commission and the Local Government Advisory Committees to ensure effective representation of interests of that sub-region.
- Support for the Commission and Sub-regional Local Government Advisory Committees through working parties of senior council and NSW Government Departmental officers to provide technical input, manage the significant workload and advise the elected representatives on decisions.

*How could the Greater Sydney Commission effectively collaborate with sub-regions and individual councils within the sub-regions?*

WSROC councils have extensive and significant experience in local and regional strategic planning and in inter-council collaboration, and a willingness to facilitate growth and development when it is accompanied by appropriate and timely enabling infrastructure. This expertise should be utilized in a variety of ways and levels and can be utilized at both the sub-regional level, relating to councils in each of the West, Central West and South West sub-regions, but also on a broader level covering the WSROC and MACROC councils in strategic planning at the metropolitan level.

The most effective mechanism for the GSC to collaborate with sub-regions and individual councils within sub-regions is through the sub-regional planning model outlined in this submission. This proposes a division of roles as follows:

#### **Greater Sydney Commission**

- Focus on the a primary role of overseeing metropolitan-wide issues and enabling appropriate growth through infrastructure delivery and managing catalytic infrastructure projects such as Badgery's Creek, as well as approving and monitoring implementation of sub-regional plans
- Empowering Sub-regional Committees to lead the development and delivery of the respective sub-regional plans.

#### **Sub-regional committees**

- Oversee the preparation of Sub-regional Plan from a sub-regional approach including identification of strategic land use and infrastructure priorities
- Monitor implementation of the Plan and report to the Commission on the performance of the sub-region and any issues in regard to targets, infrastructure and other identified matters
- Contribute where requested to sub-regional or regional planning initiatives, including consideration of proposals for rezoning of major precincts, structure planning and supporting local councils with the preparation of Local Plans
- Ensure appropriate coordination of essential services, including water, sewerage and electricity to new-release areas
- Identify and advise the Commission on strategic planning issues for the sub-region.
- Determine that the Sub-regional Committees consist of the Mayor, or Mayor's delegate, from each Council in that Sub-region plus that sub-regions representative on the Greater Sydney Commission.

- Provide support for the Commission and Sub-regional Local Government Advisory Committees through senior officers groups of senior council and NSW Government Departmental officers to act as the 'working parties' to provide technical input, manage the expected significant workload and advise the elected representatives.

A major priority in collaboration between the GSC and local councils is ensuring that Sub-regional Plans include approved infrastructure growth plans to truly integrate, fund and phase infrastructure construction by the NSW Government together with housing and employment delivery by councils. This is critical to address the risk that development occurs without the necessary infrastructure as has occurred in the past.

For example a Sub-regional Plan may include council zoning land parcels for increased housing density in stages over time, with progression to the next stage subject to delivery by the NSW Government of a planned road or public transport upgrade. Essential services such as water, sewage and electricity are also required to be supplied in a timely manner to greenfield sites. Current delays in installing these services are hampering housing construction and development in several key areas of Western Sydney.

The accountability for implementation needs to be binding for both state and local governments. It will be critical that the GSC ensures that priorities agreed in the metropolitan and sub-regional plans are funded by Treasury and implemented by the agency responsible. Successful implementation of sub-regional and local plans rely on delivery of these priorities such as transport infrastructure, which have in the past been outlined in state planning documents but not delivered.

#### *Which immediate priorities should the GSC focus on?*

The focus of the GSC should be on managing population growth through housing, employment and infrastructure planning and delivery, and overseeing sustainable growth and land use planning across the Sydney basin.

It should take a lead role in engaging the people of Sydney in developing and delivering the Metropolitan Plan - A Plan for Growing Sydney, clearly articulating the vision and strategies for Sydney's growth and building an understanding and ownership of the Plan among communities.

The GSC should take ownership of the Metropolitan Strategy and provide leadership and confidence in the Plan, to provide certainty and support for planned growth for all Sydneysiders. It needs to play a central role in apportioning housing and employment to priority areas, guaranteeing associated infrastructure delivery, and protecting and retaining strategically important areas for the future of Sydney such as defining the urban/rural boundary and protecting environmentally sensitive and heritage areas.

#### *How could the GSC work with communities across Sydney as they plan for the future of Sydney?*

Encouraging participation and engagement across all members of the community will be essential in ensuring support and confidence in the role of the GSC and its Plans. Long term, detailed strategic communications policies will need to be developed and implemented with specific attention to NESB and CALD communities. Emphasis on the vision and overall goals of the plans must be explained with due respect and relevance to the unique and individual nature of communities. Above all, communities must be given genuine avenues of participation and encouraged to provide feedback and commentary on proposals before they happen, not as or when.



## 4. Contacts and more information

For more information, please contact:

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