

28 March 2024

Ms Lynda Voltz MP
Chair
Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Voltz

Re Inquiry into critical transport infrastructure supporting the Western Sydney International Airport and Western Sydney Aerotropolis

I write in relation to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure's inquiry into critical transport infrastructure supporting the Western Sydney International Airport and Western Sydney Aerotropolis.

Urban Taskforce is a strong supporter of Western Sydney Airport and The Aerotropolis and we are keen to ensure that this massive investment results in both employment and housing for Western Sydney. The Airport's potential to deliver housing and employment opportunities connected to services and social infrastructure in the Western Sydney will prove to be a significant contributor to the NSW economy and the growth of the region.

Critically, the economic boost brought by the airport, as it builds operational capacity, coupled with the public investment in key social and economic infrastructure, will support private investment in well-located housing and deliver employment opportunities that strengthen the NSW economy.

The infrastructure planning and funding has been cursed by the erstwhile Greater Cities Commission and Commonwealth's obsession with high profile "vanity projects", namely: the M12 and the western Sydney Airport Metro. The infrastructure needed to deliver jobs and homes appears to have been forgotten.

Housing demand, boosted by population growth, particularly in Sydney's southwest, demands a new approach to the planning for and delivery of critical transport infrastructure to support and take advantage of the massive investment in the airport.

Prioritise road infrastructure supporting near-term employment growth

Key roads requiring major upgrades have not been prioritised. These include Elizabeth Drive, Mamre Road (between Elizabeth Drive and Erskine Park), 15th

Avenue and Badgerys Creek Road. These are key classified roads which will provide direct access to new employment centres in the areas surrounding the airport and Western Sydney in general.

The Western Sydney Airport Project is set to transform the region, facilitating growth in industrial, commercial and residential precincts with vital connections to health, education and other social infrastructure. However, none of this can happen without an upgrade to these roads. You can't run massive logistics facilities without a quality road network. Unfortunately, the M12 does not service the vast majority of the land set aside for employment and airport related research logistics. Once you are on the M12, basically, you can't turn off it. It is elevated and walled (like all motorways).

The critical infrastructure needed to underpin the growth in the employment centres surrounding the new airport, often spoken of as the key to the success of the future of Western Sydney, are largely unplanned, are certainly unfunded, and this will hold back the potential of Western Sydney.

It is also important that provisions for health, education and other social infrastructure are planned for, with the early securing of land for these services. This will provide private investors with confidence that the areas will see population growth serviced by the full suite of government infrastructure.

Urban Taskforce is alarmed that with only two years from the opening of the new Western Sydney Airport, TfNSW is only now contemplating (completing a concept design and REF) some upgrades (see [Mamre Road upgrade – between Erskine Park Road, Erskine Park and Kerrs Road, Kemps Creek | Transport for NSW](#)). Other planning and works need to be fast tracked for upgrade (eg. Elizabeth Drive from Badgerys Creek Drive east to the M7).

Given the significance of the road upgrades required it is critical that significant resources are directed to upgrade state road infrastructure.

Recommendation 1: that the Committee recommend the prioritisation of road infrastructure supporting near-term employment on the roadways: Mamre Road, Elizabeth Drive, 15th Avenue, and Badgerys Creek Road.

Establish a government taskforce to address all remaining infrastructure bottlenecks surrounding the Western Sydney Airport

While the planned motorway for the Western Sydney Airport is in the midst of delivery, the progress demonstrated by Transport for NSW in upgrading roads (noted in the previous section) for housing near employment has been glacial.

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure must make recommendations to the Premier's Department and Infrastructure NSW on the implications of TfNSW lack of urgency over the upgrade of this critical infrastructure that needs to be upgraded in time for the opening of the new airport.

There appears to be neither leadership nor accountability for infrastructure delivery. The present arrangements are too 'committee' focussed, with all parties happy to see deadlines drift out while other agencies investigate "issues".

A whole-of-government taskforce, headed by Premiers Department and comprising Infrastructure NSW, the Secretaries of Transport, Treasury, Planning and the CEO of Sydney Water, should be convened as a matter of urgency to resolve infrastructure bottlenecks, coordinate whole-of-government response, and hold all departments accountable to delivery deadlines ahead of airport opening.

Recommendation 2: that the NSW Government establish a multi-agency taskforce, comprising Secretaries of relevant Government Departments and headed by the Secretary of the NSW Premiers Department, to address infrastructure bottlenecks, coordinate whole of government response and hold all departments accountable to delivery deadlines ahead of airport opening.

Connect rail infrastructure from Western Sydney Airport to nearby metro connections

The public infrastructure needed to service this growth in housing supply in Southwest Sydney needs to be delivered in a timely and coordinated fashion. Achieving the densities required to support investment in Metro will not be a significant issue in this area and something the larger master-planner developers would support.

The proposed North South Metro link, from St Marys to the Aerotropolis and future links to Leppington (or Glenfield), Oran Park and Macarthur and in time, an extension north to Tallawong are all important. It is critical that the planning for an extension to the Metro to the South and Southeast commence as a matter of priority.

Recommendation 3: that the Committee recommends the NSW Government prioritise the planning, corridor reservation and delivery of future metro extensions including the extension of:

- 1. the Sydney Metro – Western Sydney Airport to Leppington**
- 2. the Sydney Metro – Western Sydney Airport through Oran Park to Macarthur**
- 3. the Sydney Metro – Western Sydney Airport from St Marys to Tallawong.**

Connecting the three cities of Sydney through one Metro would seem to be an obvious goal – but to date the cost of extending the Sydney Metro West from Westmead to Bradfield has not been preferred.

Nonetheless, a direct metro connection between the Sydney CBD, Parramatta and Bradfield is something that must be progressed and this should start with the reservation of the corridor and identification of station locations.

While at this stage, due to the budget constraints in NSW, this is a longer-term option, land reservations and future stations should be planned now.

The State Government should look to the Commonwealth to support these significant enhancements of the rail and metro networks with the Commonwealth.

Recommendation 4: that, subject to the availability of finance, consideration also be given to connecting the Sydney Metro West through to the new Western Sydney Airport.

Significant Federal infrastructure funding directed to the infrastructure basics

The former State and Federal Governments' focus on the delivery of the M12 Motorway and the Western Sydney Metro was misplaced. These infrastructure assets will be needed only once the airport approaches 10 million annual passengers in 2031.

The focus on these infrastructure projects has diverted funding away from investment in road augmentation and water infrastructure that is critical to delivering the jobs that the investment of public funds in the new airport always promised.

There is little that can be done now about the funding allocated to the new Metro line between Badgerys Creek and St Marys, or the M12, as contracts have been let and work is well underway. However, in the short term, there is significant scope for Commonwealth government support for the upgrade of 15th Avenue, Badgerys Creek Road, Elizabeth Drive and Mamre Road – each critical for the development of those employment precincts.

The Federal Government should consider allocating funds in this year's Budget to contribute towards critical Western Sydney infrastructure including funding for roads, water and sewerage to deliver more housing in the growth areas of lands particularly around the new Western Sydney airport.

Unlocking infrastructure is critical to realising the potential of greenfield housing development and employment in Western Sydney, particularly in terms of the ambitious targets set for NSW by the National Housing Accord.

Recommendation 5: that the Committee call upon the Federal Government to allocate infrastructure funding to Western Sydney Housing and Jobs Enabling Infrastructure Fund.

A commitment to the promises of the Western Sydney Airport and Sydney Metro – Western Sydney Airport Business Case in terms of housing & jobs

Approving large investment in a project like the Nancy Bird Walton Airport, along with the new Metro public transport infrastructure, were both supported by a business case that justifies these investments.

Housing and employment connected to social infrastructure are critical outcomes and benefits of these projects. The anticipation of new employment and housing all result in forecasts of income tax, company tax, stamp duty, payroll tax, GST revenue, support for social and affordable housing as well as local and state infrastructure contributions.

One of the great failings of Governments (both State and Federal) is their unwillingness or ability to track and report on “benefits realisation”.

Too often, an optimistic outlook is presented in the business case to justify the allocation of public funds into a project. Then, after consultation with communities, the “benefits” that were said to accrue to the project are diminished.

The anticipated economic and housing supply benefits that underpinned these business cases should be carried over into the subsequent developmental outcomes associated with any infrastructure project.

The planning system must be required to accommodate the projected uplift of the relevant metrics as outlined in the business case. This is the only way to ensure the benefits to the economy, arising from the commitment of massive sums of public money for the delivery of the infrastructure, are realised.

Metrics should be stringently reviewed by the Government to ensure that the anticipated benefits are realised and where this is not the case, steps taken to deliver the benefits for the economy through increasing the metrics associated with other areas of the project.

The lack of any body which is responsible or accountable for the realisation of these benefits is part of the reason we are not seeing the benefits we were promised.

Recommendation 6: that the committee recommend the NSW Government establish a clear mechanism to ensure that the full value predicted in the relevant business case for each transport infrastructure project, is realised.

A broader perspective of Bradfield City in the context of the surrounding precincts

With the release of the Bradfield City Draft Master Plan, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Western Parkland City Authority is focussing singularly on Bradfield City development. There remains considerable confusion among landowners, industry, the media and the community, as to the role of the Western Parkland City Authority.

The lack of provision for developable land delivery in precincts immediately outside of Bradfield displays a myopic approach which counters accepted notions of how regions socially and economically develop.

This lack of planning in surrounding regions threatens to prevent the delivery of housing near employment and service centres that the region so vitally requires to achieve the goals of the Western Sydney Airport and Aerotropolis projects.

Coordinating delivery and growth of the Aerotropolis and its neighbouring regions is now a priority. Connecting Bradfield City will evoke investment interest now, so key workers can be housed near vital employment opportunities in the near term.

Recommendation 7: Infrastructure for NSW, or the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure should work closely with the Infrastructure Delivery Taskforce (See Recommendation 2) to ensure that infrastructure is planned and delivered to service the private sectors owned land that comprises the vast majority of all the lands in the Western Parkland City.

Conclusion

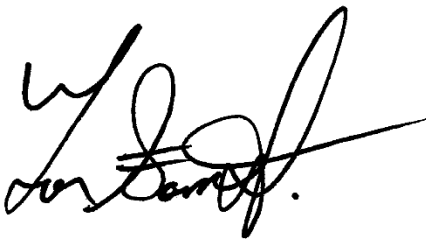
The LA Committee on Transport and Infrastructure's decision to inquire into critical transport infrastructure for Western Sydney Airport and the Aerotropolis offers the opportunity to reappraise the priorities of these projects, their promised metrics and how they can best be delivered moving forward.

Rethinking the rationale behind transport infrastructure in the region to that of a broader, connected ecosystem of connected housing, employment and infrastructure will maximise the capture of additional opportunities and provide the highest level of value to the community benefits promised by the business case and other WSA planning documentation.

A clear focus on infrastructure that will support housing supply and jobs is needed. Establishing a Taskforce with a clear focus on infrastructure coordination and delivery is critical to public confidence and accountability.

Should any Committee member wish to discuss matters relating to this submission, please contact Head of Policy, Planning and Research, Mr Stephen Fenn on 9238 3969 or via email stephen@urbantaskforce.com.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Forrest', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Tom Forrest
Chief Executive Officer