

Submission

No 27

INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

Organisation: Wollongong City Council
Name: Councillor Gordon Bradberry OAM
Position: Lord Mayor
Date Received: 29/02/2012

Mr C Casuscelli MP
Committee on Transport and Infrastructure
transportinfrastructure@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Your Ref: P12/5335
Our Ref: 202105
Date: 28 February 2012

Dear Mr Casuscelli

INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

I refer to your letter of 30 November 2011 on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure inviting Council to make a submission to the inquiry and thank you for this opportunity.

Wollongong is the capital of the Illawarra Region and is experiencing an increase in inner city living with major commercial and retail developments currently under construction. Based on comprehensive background studies, the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan (LEP 2009) permits significant development around the Wollongong Railway Station with increased density and building heights of up to 40 storeys (120 metres). Clearly the potential for substantial transit oriented development (TOD) in this precinct would have great economic benefits to the city and region.

Some 12 kilometres south of the Wollongong City Centre at West Dapto, the NSW State Government has assisted Council address housing demand by planning for some additional 50,000 residents. Rezoned land is currently being subdivided and sold in this area. To avoid traditional "urban sprawl" Council proposes Dapto to be the major district centre to serve that new development with a major transport hub at Dapto Railway Station. Again, similar to Wollongong Station only to a lesser scale, Council proposes mixed use transit supportive development around this transport hub.

Accordingly, I am pleased to make a submission to your Committee for both of the abovementioned projects and in doing so would seek the NSW Government's renewed commitment to both these key regional projects. Furthermore, Council, at its meeting of 27 February 2012, endorsed a detailed submission that I enclose for your Committee's consideration.

Again, on behalf of Council I thank you for this opportunity to make a submission that has the potential to make a positive difference to our city.

Should you wish to discuss these matters please call me directly or for any technical enquiries please contact Michael Malone, Infrastructure Strategy & Planning Manager, on 4227 7621.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Bradbery', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Lord Mayor
Councillor Gordon Bradbery OAM
Wollongong City Council**


Encl.



Wollongong City Council


Submission to

INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS



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Councillor Gordon Bradbury OAM
Lord Mayor
City of Wollongong
28 February, 2012.



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David Farmer
General Manager
Wollongong City Council
28 February, 2012

1. The Submission Context

Wollongong City Council (WCC) appreciates this opportunity afforded by the New South Wales State Government to make a submission to this “Inquiry into the utilisation of rail corridors”.

This submission presents Council’s vision and plans for two specific locations on the South Coast Railway corridor namely, Wollongong Station and Dapto Station precincts. Council’s submission on these two locations is backed by an extensive body of planning and feasibility work in collaboration with a number of State Government Agencies.

2. Rail Corridors in Wollongong

- Historically, the South Coast Railway has been a significant contributor to the Wollongong way of life since its construction in the mid 1880s.
- There are 21 stations on the South Coast Railway Line within the Wollongong LGA and another 4 stations on the Port Kembla spur line.
- Rail patronage and commuter numbers reflect 2006 ABS Census data showing some 18% of the Wollongong workforce commute to Sydney.
- Freight movement by rail competes for access paths with passenger services. In excess of 20 million tonnes per annum of freight are moved into and through the region by rail with the majority being bulk commodities (coal and grain) bound for Port Kembla.

3. Regional and Local Planning Context

- The NSW Government's Illawarra Regional Strategy: 2006 – 2031 adopts a hierarchy of commercial centres and sets out a broad framework of development for the Region over the next 20 or more years.
- The Strategy specifically plans for significant development within the Wollongong City Centre (designated a Regional City) and the West Dapto Release Area where Dapto CBD is planned to be a major regional centre. Also, a number of local centres are identified at railway stations on the South Coast Railway Line.
- Wollongong LEP 2009 largely accommodates planned growth throughout the LGA with an appropriate mix of land uses and densities for each commercial centre.

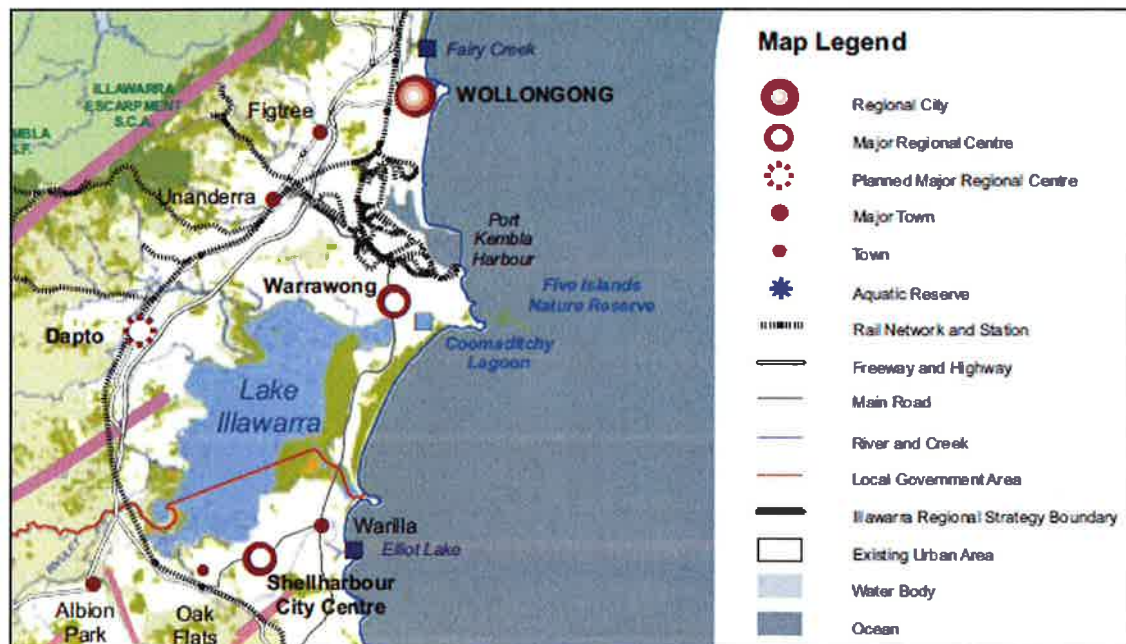


Figure 1. Wollongong, Regional City and Dapto, Planned Major Regional Centre

4. Council Response to Inquiry Terms of Reference

The remainder of this submission follows the following format:

- Wollongong Station Precinct (Section 4.1),
- Dapto Station Precinct (Section 4.2), and
- Summary table of “Terms of Reference” responses for Wollongong and Dapto Station precincts. (Section 4.3)

4.1 Wollongong Station Precinct

The State Government’s “Revitalising Wollongong City Centre Plan” (Dept. Planning & Infrastructure, 2006) identifies the Wollongong Station precinct as having “a critical role to play in the (revitalisation of) the City Centre”. The plan identifies significant commercial development opportunities using under-utilised sites around the station as well as air space above and adjacent to the station. An investment in public infrastructure would facilitate private sector investment in the order of \$400 million.

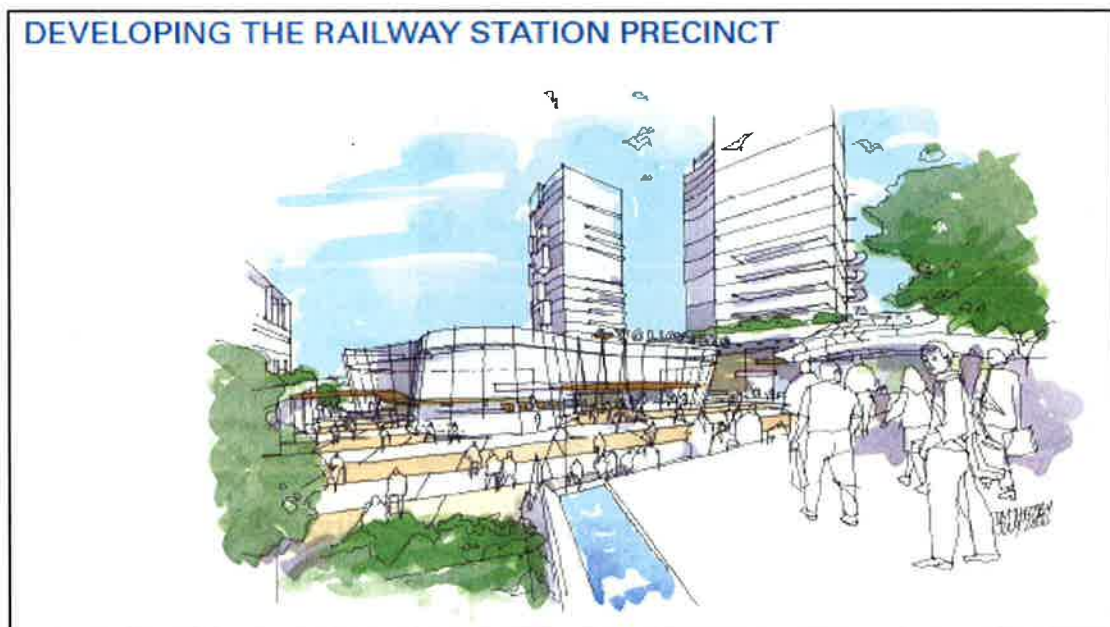


Figure 2. Artist’s impression of possible Station upgrade. (DoPI, 2006)

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The new public entry plaza, railway concourse and bus interchange on Crown Street was estimated to cost some \$30 million funded by a 1% developer contribution levy collected and paid to NSW Treasury under the provisions of Section 94EE of the EP&A Act. This levy (for this project) was removed from the Act by the Minister on 30 December 2009 for reasons including the slow rate of development in the Wollongong CBD levy catchment.

Council in conjunction with RailCorp (property), the then NSW Ministry of Transport and the then RTA (now NSW Roads and Maritime Services) engaged an experienced rail planning consultant to prepare a Wollongong Station Precinct Masterplan in 2005, see Figure 3.

The Masterplan considered the best use of both air space and public and private land holdings adjacent to Wollongong Station. The plan incorporates “best practice” Transit Oriented Development (TOD) principles and represents the practical integration between transport planning and land use planning in the City Centre. Wollongong Station will become an important arrival point and destination for many regional commuter, shopping, recreation and business trips.

This masterplan informed the development of the Wollongong City Centre LEP 2007 that then permitted 120 metre (40 storey) building heights and generous Floor Space Ratios (FSR) of up to 6 : 1 adjacent to Wollongong Railway Station (Figure 4). That LEP has been replaced by Wollongong LEP 2009 which incorporates the same provisions around the Station. These planning provisions are considered to offer an attractive and significant development opportunity. The considerable economic, social and environmental benefits that are expected to be generated by the permitted development would both contribute to the revitalisation of Wollongong City Centre and also have a positive impact on the wider Regional economy.

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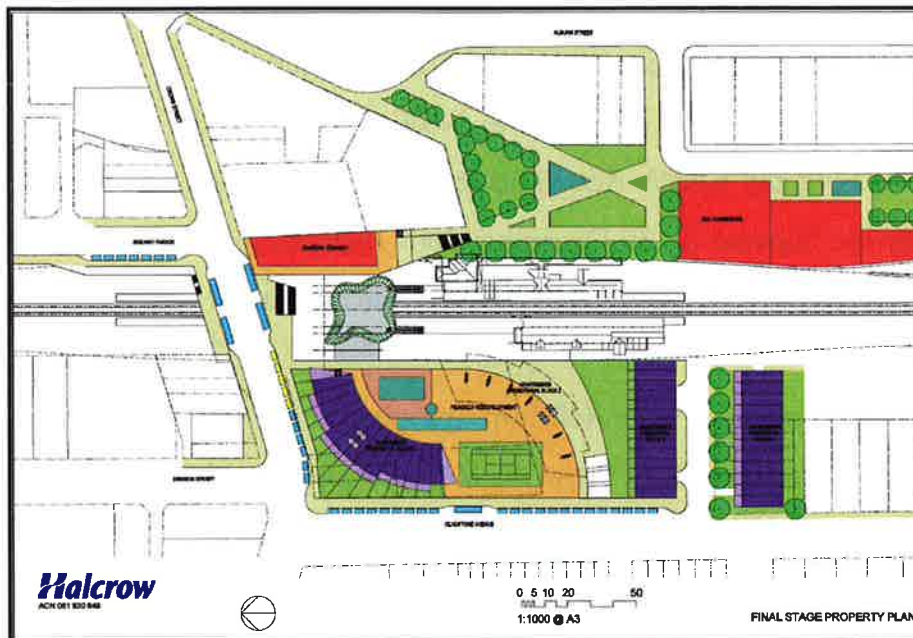


Figure 3. Wollongong Station Masterplan (WCC 2005)

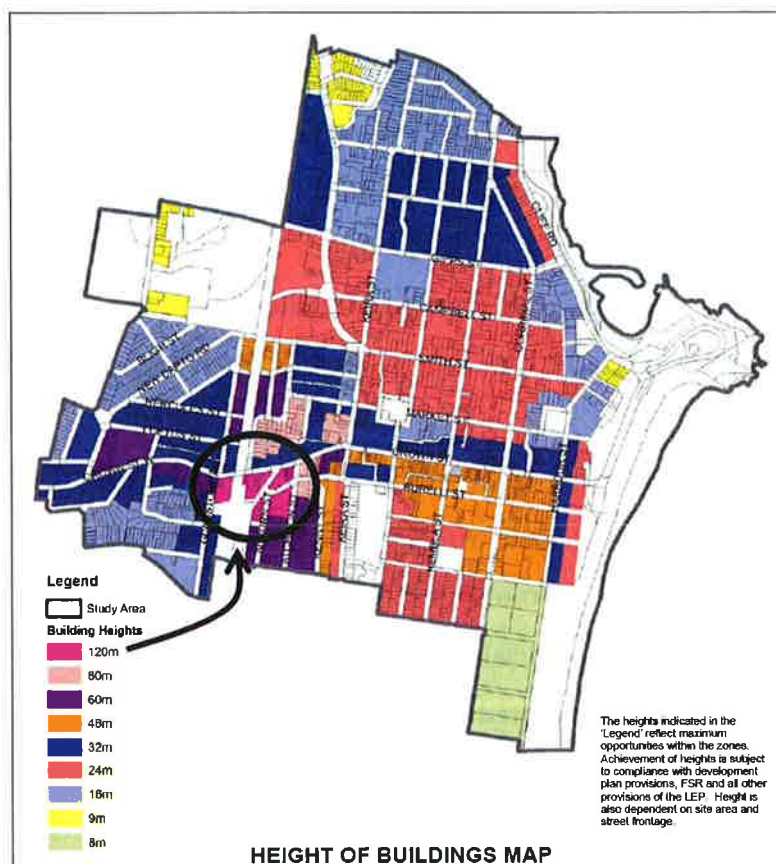


Figure 4. Wollongong Station Precinct (Max. 40 storeys)

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Figures 5, 6 and 7 below and over page of St Leonards Station precinct indicate possible urban design outcomes possible at Wollongong Station.



**Figure 5. Access from St. Leonards Station Concourse to Platforms.
(Used as example for development of Wollongong Station masterplan)**



Figure 6. Access to St. Leonards Station Concourse and Bus Interchange.

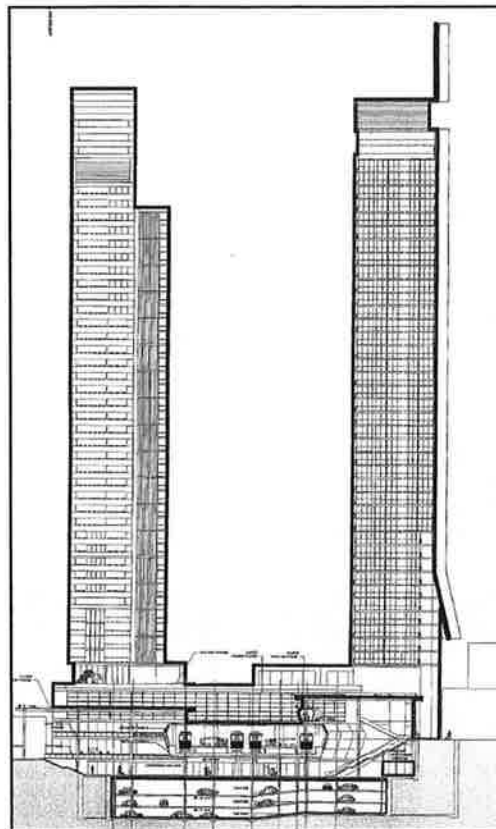


Figure 7. St. Leonards Station (example of TOD project)

Importantly, through (for example) a possible public private partnership (PPP) commercial arrangement, the Wollongong Station masterplan presents an opportunity to make a significant contribution towards the revitalisation of a struggling major regional city.

Furthermore, the potential development, shown as being feasible in the masterplan background study, would have iconic visual and functional significance, making Wollongong CBD unmistakably recognisable as the Regional Capital. Such recognition would strengthen both private sector and Government confidence to invest and do business in Wollongong.

Finally, extensive public consultation through public meetings and media coverage has shown very strong support for the masterplan proposal.

4.2 Dapto Station Precinct

Dapto Railway Station is central to the Illawarra Regional Strategy's planned Major Regional Centre of Dapto. Dapto is also the focus of the State Government designated greenfields growth area of the West Dapto that will ultimately see an additional population of some 50,000 people. A Dapto Town Centre Study (WCC, 2006) identified significant development opportunities surrounding Dapto Station that could utilise air space as well as adjacent public and private land.

Dapto Station and surrounding RailCorp property has been the subject of a study titled "Dapto Railway Station Precinct and Residual Land Concept Plan Study" (RailCorp 25 September 2009). This study evaluated the development potential of identified surplus RailCorp property whilst considering the future access needs of Dapto Station. However, there are significant adjacent landholdings in Council ownership that were not considered in the RailCorp study. Therefore, there is a pressing need to initiate a "Whole of Government" study to develop a comprehensive Dapto Station Precinct Masterplan. The plan must address a wide range of planning matters including best and highest use of all adjacent property with appropriate urban design to deliver a quality mixed use medium density development that includes a multi-modal transport interchange.



Figure 8. Dapto Railway Station Entrance (existing)

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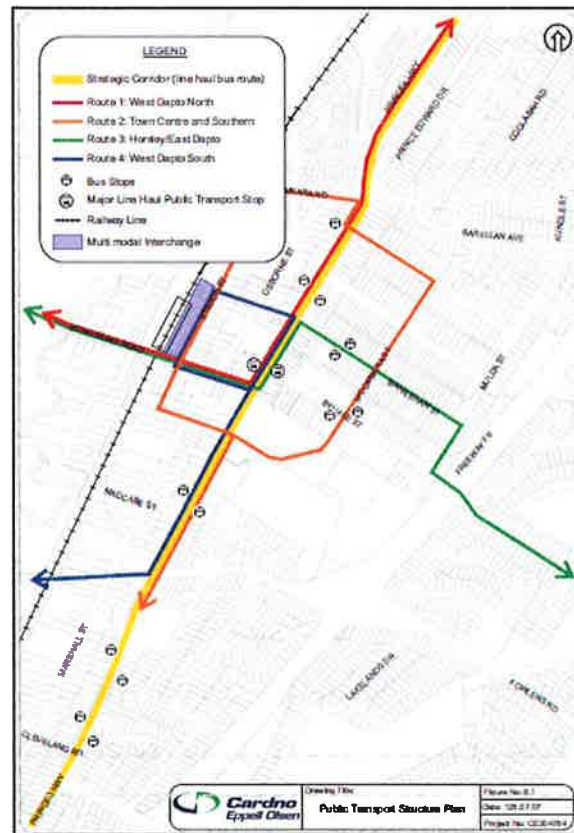


Figure 9. Dapto Station Precinct – Transport Access



Figure 10. Liverpool Station (example of possible station architecture)

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4.3 Summary Table addressing Inquiry Terms of Reference

Submission Response to Relevant Terms of Reference Matters		
Relevant Matters	Wollongong Station	Dapto Station
1. Opportunity for mixed use property development.	Regional City Centre location. Proposed high density mixed use development permitted by existing Wollongong LEP 2009.	Major Regional Centre. Possible medium density mixed use development permitted by existing Wollongong LEP (West Dapto) 2010
2. Generate income to fund future infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precinct masterplan identified potential sale of surplus RailCorp property. • Significant potential developer contributions. • Potential retail property rental income. 	RailCorp study indicates potential sale of surplus property.
3. Facilitate sustainable urban renewal and development.	Public investment (State Government) to provide catalyst to facilitate significant private sector development to revitalise the rundown end of the Wollongong CBD.	Possible mixed use development incorporating transit interchange is consistent with the Dapto Town Centre Study.
4. Facilitate transit oriented development (TOD) schemes around railway stations.	Wollongong LEP 2009 and the precinct masterplan incorporate TOD principles including high density mixed use development with significant employment and residential at the Illawarra's "Central Station". The NSW State Plan includes a mode shift goal of 15% by public transport for Wollongong CBD commuters by 2021	Potential major development to incorporate transit interchange to accommodate West Dapto's growth (+ 50,000 additional population) to strengthen Dapto Regional Centre and meet 15% mode shift goals for new West Dapto development

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<p>5. Connectivity of communities either side of railway line.</p>	<p>Enhanced accessible pedestrian “main street” station access based on CPTED principles to replace existing unsafe and steep pathways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Current poor pedestrian, vehicular and bus access to be improved in the short term with traffic mgt. and station access upgrades. ● Medium density mixed use development (TOD) incorporating a railway overbridge and transit interchange to be planned for the longer term.
<p>6. Current planning and policy framework.</p>	<p>Detailed precinct masterplan (& supporting study), Wollongong LEP 2009 and DCP all support a high density mixed use development (TOD) at Wollongong Station.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dapto Town Centre Study, Wollongong LEP (West Dapto) 2010, DCP and RailCorp residual property study. ● URGENTLY need a comprehensive Dapto Station Precinct Masterplan study.
<p>7. Compatibility of projects within local community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extensive consultation in preparation of Wollongong City Centre Revitalisation plan. ● Consultation on Station Precinct Masterplan undertaken with very high media and public support. 	<p>Consultation undertaken in preparing Dapto Town Centre plan with significant community engagement preparing Dapto traffic and access plans. Strong support for improved access to and from Horsley with improvements that would address the “bottleneck” at the rail rail level crossing adjacent to Dapto Station.</p>

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<p>8. Examples of best practice from other jurisdictions.</p>	<p>Extensive research undertaken to source best practice TOD principles and case studies. Urban design guidance taken from the St. Leonards (Sydney) rail station and surrounding high density development.</p>	<p>Experienced transport and planning consultants engaged by Council to prepare the Dapto Town Centre plan with regard to examples of TOD and transit interchange at various locations.</p>
<p>Barriers to Progress</p>		
<p>9. Regulatory and policy barriers to implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Government commitment sought to confirm and progress TOD at Wollongong Railway Station. • Possible reconstitution of “whole of government” multi-agency PCG to facilitate implementation of “catalyst” public infrastructure. • Loss of State Government 1% S94EE developer levy. (See #10 below) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wollongong City Council seeks partnership with State Government to plan best practice TOD project within the Dapto Station precinct. • A Dapto Station Precinct masterplan would investigate the practicality of medium density mixed use development together with best practice transit interchange PLUS resolution of alternative to the existing railway level crossing problems.
<p>10. Issues relating to financing and funding.</p>	<p>\$30million “seed” funding required to facilitate potential private sector investment estimated to be valued up to \$400million. (Possible PPP commercial arrangement or developer contribution to reduce financial burden on Government.)</p>	<p>Suggested State Government (planning and funding) lead with Council partnership.</p>