

**Submission
No 37**

**CRITICAL TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTING THE WESTERN
SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND WESTERN SYDNEY
AEROTROPOLIS**

Organisation: Royal Agricultural Society of NSW

Date Received: 5 April 2024

5th April 2024

The Hon. Lynda Voltz MP
Committee Chair
Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport & Infrastructure
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000
By e-mail: transportinfrastructure@parliament.nsw.gov.au

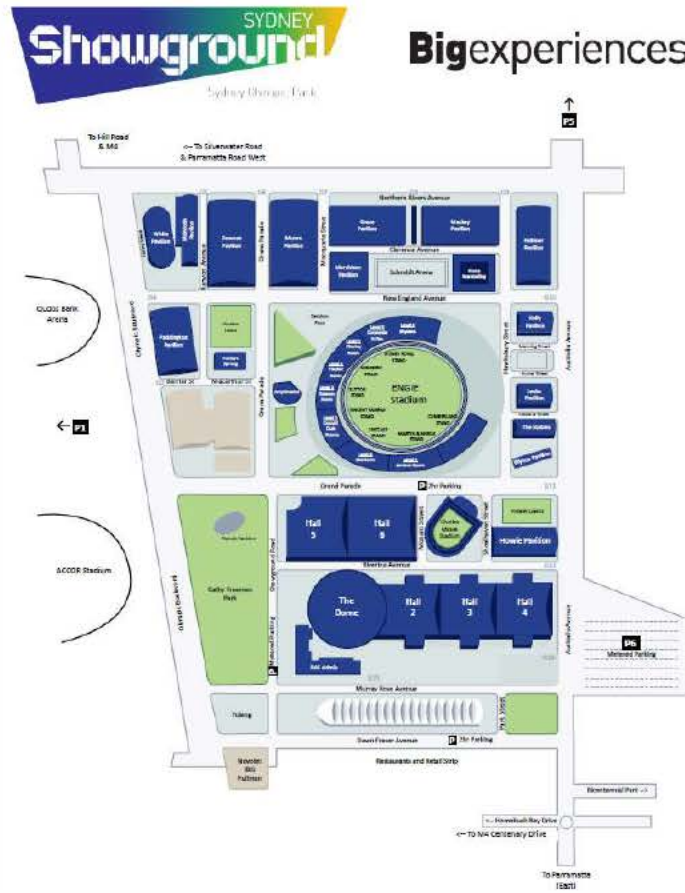
Reference: Critical transport infrastructure supporting the Western Sydney International Airport and Western Sydney Aerotropolis

Dear Ms Voltz

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) is pleased to have the opportunity to provide this submission to the Committee and welcomes further dialogue as required.

The RAS is a truly iconic Australian organisation and has been an influential force in the direction and development of Australian agriculture through competitions, education and events since its foundation in 1822. In 2022 we celebrated our bicentenary and entered our 3rd century of continued operation.

Sydney Showground is at the heart of Sydney Olympic Park (SOP) and is operated by the RAS on a long term 99 + 99 year lease from the Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA). Facilities include the Dome & Engie Stadium.



Royal Agricultural Society of NSW

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In its role as an exponent for excellence in agriculture, the RAS organises, supports, champions and underpins events and competitions, acts as a guardian for the state's agricultural heritage, celebrates NSW's achievements in agriculture and works to promote the viability of rural and regional communities by ensuring that NSW remains a thriving and innovative agricultural producer.

Home to the RAS and the Sydney Royal Easter Show (SRES), Sydney Showground provides a year-round exhibition and events venue that hosts a diverse range of activity, exhibitions, sporting events, corporate functions and music events. Sydney Showground is a complementary venue to the new International Convention Centre at Darling Harbour and is Western Sydney's number 1 event and exhibition venue. Sydney Showground is also home to the AFL's Greater Western Sydney Giants and cricket's Sydney Thunder both playing out of the Sydney Showground Stadium otherwise known as Engie Stadium, Western Sydney's premier sporting oval.

SOP attracts over 10 million annual visitors including 1.7 million to Sydney Showground. As identified by John O'Neill on behalf of the NSW Government in 2007, the NSW event industry cannot optimise its significant opportunity to drive events and attendance and in turn the significant economic multipliers that exist by focussing purely on one CBD Convention Centre at Darling Harbour, as good as the subsequent new ICC might be. Ironically, due to the ICC's success it is clear that many domestic event opportunities are being lost interstate and overseas due to Sydney not having an alternate venue of quality in Western Sydney such as at the NSW Government owned Sydney Showground.

Importance of Transport

The new Western Sydney Airport and surrounding Aerotropolis creates an outstanding opportunity for the State of NSW. Specifically, the opportunity to ensure that business customers and tourists using or proposing to use this new development do so in order to undertake their business and tourism activities in Western Sydney. However, customers are more likely to use both the airport and conduct business in Western Sydney if the transport options are cohesively connected. For example, not providing a direct train link from the new airport directly to Western Sydney's premier City of Parramatta and the network beyond created by MetroWest to Sydney Olympic Park will be detrimental to the patronage of the airport, of MetroWest itself and of Sydney Olympic Park and its ability to drive economic benefit and the visitor economy. The costs associated with adding this train line inevitably in the future will surely be more expensive than if it were delivered from the outset and the lost opportunities by not doing so are arguably immeasurable.

Sydney Showground Development

The RAS, in conjunction with the Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA), has prepared a site master plan for the upgrade of Sydney Showground. **The RAS is seeking a strategic Government investment in a State-owned asset of which the RAS is the custodian (99 + 99-year lease) and operator charged with optimising the social and economic benefit and in particular the sustainable support for Agriculture in Regional & Rural NSW.**

The proposed RAS/Sydney Showground Master plan cleared Gate 2 (Final Business Case) of the INSW Investor Assurance Framework in April 2019 and is now awaiting funding. The fact that the Government is prepared to invest some \$300m into upgrading an existing rugby league stadium in Penrith for little, if any incremental benefit but has not invested in the upgrade of Sydney Showground (which Government owns) despite the huge and enduring economic and social uplift this would create is, at best very disappointing.

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Convention Centre/Auditorium



NSW Agricultural Centre of Excellence/Australia's Food Showcase



The RAS – Supporting Regional and Rural Communities

The RAS, a not-for-profit organisation plays a significant role supporting regional and rural communities including:

- Engaging, educating and informing our communities on the value of sustainable agriculture and quality produce through events which support agricultural excellence and innovation;
- Working diligently to develop and maintain strong working relationships with regional organisations and their communities with mutual interests;
- Maximising our investments in livestock & produce competitions and programs that support sustainable agricultural development, improving the quality of agricultural produce and animal breeds and educating the community about food security.

In the current economic climate, RAS needs to be proactively supporting and offering even greater ongoing assistance to agricultural communities to ensure rural communities remain socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. The implementation of the site Master Plan will create additional revenue streams, centred on the new convention centre/auditorium and Australia's Food Showcase that will enable:

- Increases in investments in and support for the NSW 'Show' program (192 regional & rural shows) throughout the State to support regional economies;
- Increases in funding support for the RAS Foundation, in turn increasing investment in scholarships, grants and direct support in and for rural communities;
- Sydney Olympic Park to become 'where the Country meets the City 365' as a major marketing and branding opportunity for Western Sydney to support economic uplift and drive patronage of incoming public transport solutions;
- Increases in education investment and programs to be facilitated at the proposed Australian Food Showcase linked with outreach programs in NSW rural and regional locations, and
- Increased awareness and understanding of the very high standards of RAS award winning and nationally significant agricultural produce to showcase and sell the best of NSW and Australian produce informing vital Food Security requirements.

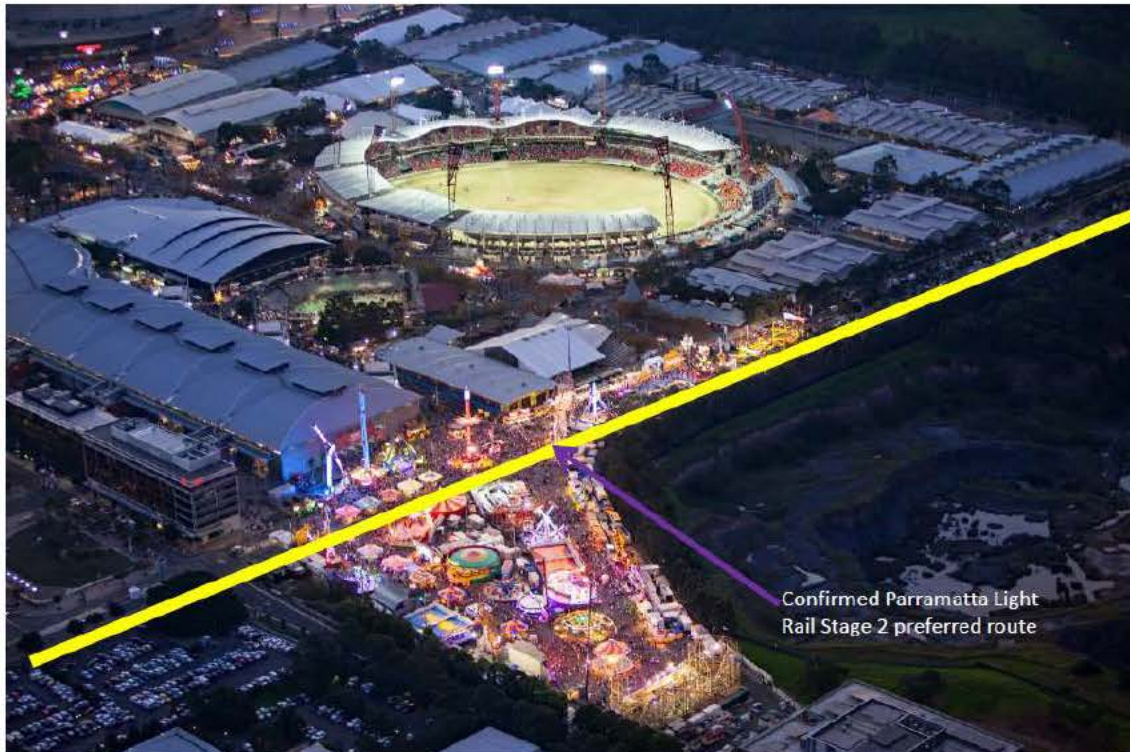
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Key Features of the development include:¹

- **A new convention/auditorium for Western Sydney** – a 3-4,000 seat multi-purpose space, with 10 separate meeting/breakout spaces to cater to both domestic convention type and cultural uses including theatre and music. Complementing the ICC and Riverside Theatre, it will enhance Sydney and Paramatta's capacity to stage more lucrative business and entertainment events, effectively doubling the business event capability of NSW. The facility will also diversify economic activity in the Olympic Park precinct, a fast-growing mixed-use hub and Sydney's major events capital. **N.B Victoria is proceeding with its second Convention Centre in Geelong and will once again be able to provide clients with greater choice than NSW.**



- **The permanent relocation of the Sydney Royal Easter Show (SRES) Carnival.** This will provide for the delivery of the Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2 preferred route and release a substantial plot of state-owned land (adjacent to light rail, metro rail and heavy rail) for future development. Utilising identical planning controls to other recent residential developments within Sydney Olympic Park, the value of this site could be >\$350million, if it were to be utilised for such a purpose.
- **The upgrade of the Schmidt Arena.** Currently used for equestrian events (a major drawcard for the SRES and a vital element of regional shows nation-wide), the upgrade will enhance equestrian events and allow for year-round use of the arena for a variety of events and activities including riding for the disabled type programs.

¹ The RAS would be pleased to discuss all items included to ensure an appropriate development can be delivered providing the best value for money solution whilst ensuring maximum economic and social benefits are secured. This could include agreeing to a staged delivery in distinct packages.

- A new **Agricultural Centre of Excellence/Australian Food Showcase** to allow RAS to expand its agricultural education and competition programs capitalising on the agribusiness opportunities created by the new Western Sydney Airport and ensuring NSW's produce quality and value can be optimised for the benefit of producers and the State. Whilst currently proposed as a single storey development there exists a significant opportunity to add additional floor area both through vertical development and the development of surrounding space to create a state-of-the-art agricultural retail, education and competition precinct including produce markets, a culinary school, urban rooftop garden and boutique brewery (think of it as a Sydney Fish Market for Agriculture) as a major destination and visitor attraction for Sydney Olympic Park, creating demand for both MetroWest and PLR2.

Outcomes from Government investment in the RAS Master Plan

- Significant employment driver for Western Sydney with circa **980** direct construction jobs, and over **3,700** ongoing indirect jobs
- Supports NSW state-wide agricultural innovation and technology solutions via NSW Agricultural Centre of Excellence + increases **annual RAS funding for regional agricultural programs from \$9m pa currently to \$33m** by 2040
- **BCR of 1.49² for the convention centre** alone and with all other components added, BCR of 1.05 so economic benefits outweigh economic costs. (BCR reduces due to 'not-for-profit' elements such as the Agricultural Centre of Excellence)
- Strong connection with expanded trade and exports through RAS competitions + redevelopment grows annual economic impact of the RAS business from **\$617m³** to an estimated **\$1b annually**
- **Development option** for Government from P6 carpark valued at >\$350m by the RAS agreeing to permanently relocate the annual Sydney Royal Easter Show Carnival to Olympic Boulevard
- Overall **visitation to the Showground is forecast to grow from 1.7m now to 2.94m** upon completion of the development supporting the visitor economy
- **New annual car parking revenue** to Government commencing at \$13.5m and **growing to \$32m** over 20 years
- Total **Government investment of \$447m⁴** offset by >\$350m value of P6 carpark redevelopment
- **Offers NSW and Sydney a second major convention & exhibition centre at approximately 1/3 of the cost** of a new purpose-built venue through leveraging the existing exhibition halls & infrastructure adding to the overall State capability
- **Timing is now optimal** with new Sydney Metro West project timeframe (2030) and PLR2 + the current SOPA Master plan review, the proposed developments deliver the major economic 7 day a week business and cultural activations for Sydney Olympic Park that will support the visitor economy
- **No recurrent funding** required from Government, RAS will continue to fund all operations

Government spending on essential services such as education and health is obviously critical, however we should not ignore opportunities that create economic benefit such as Sydney Showground and Sydney Olympic Park, enabling Government to increase investment in these essential services.

Sydney Olympic Park as a Destination

With the impending delivery of the proposed new Western Sydney Airport, SOP has the opportunity to become Western Sydney's equivalent of Darling Harbour; a true Western Sydney Destination optimising residential opportunities, trade and tourism particularly in relation to the important visitor economy as championed by

² A revised analysis of the potentially expanded NSW Agricultural Centre of Excellence/Australian Food Showcase forecasts an economic BCR of >4 could be achieved.

³ IER Economic Size & Scoping Study 2015

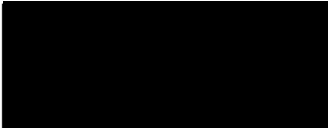
⁴ Figures current as at March 2019



Destination NSW and maximising economic impact for NSW. However, this ambition requires whole of Government support and development of significant amenities to ensure the growing population of Western Sydney can live, work and play, it cannot be delivered without the matters above being integrated and requires collaborative methods to support densification and subsequent activation. Continuing the train line to capture the enormous potential of the new Western Sydney Airport is critical and, in short without a direct connection from the new airport to Sydney Olympic Park, the social & economic opportunities and benefits of proposed upgrades such as Sydney Showground and of events at the Park in general will be severely restricted.

The RAS remains committed to assisting the NSW Government in identifying the best transport and infrastructure outcomes for the State and in particular the GOP region and should you require anything further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Seward
Head of Property

