

THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR

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The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No.4
Legislative Council
Parliament House
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Inquiry into the transport needs of Sydney's North-West sector

The Property Council of Australia is pleased to provide a submission to the NSW Legislative Council's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 and their inquiry into the transport needs of Sydney's North-West sector.

The Property Council is the national representative of the property industry. Our members help shape, build and finance our cities and have a long term interest in the future of our urban and regional centres.

There is a divergence of opinion over the most appropriate public transport solution for the growing North-West sector. While we do not have sufficient information to make a decision, analysis conducted by the Property Council of unfunded infrastructure projects in NSW shows that high capacity public transport to North-West Sydney is the number one priority.

I have enclosed a copy of our submission on the North-West Metro Link proposal as well as the NSW Component of the Property Council's Infrastructure Australia submission for your reference.

We look forward to discussing this submission and any feedback you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact Ben Lee, NSW Policy Advisor on 9033 1909 or blee@propertyoz.com.au

Yours sincerely

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NSW Executive Director

The Voice of Leadership

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SydneyLink for the Future

*Submission on the North West Metro Link
proposal*

Property Council of Australia – May 2008

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Executive Summary

The Property Council of Australia is pleased to provide a submission to the NSW State Government on the Metro Link component of SydneyLink.

The Property Council of Australia is the national representative of the property industry. Our members help shape, build and finance our cities and have a long term interest in the future of our urban and regional centres.

We support the development of a long term integrated plan for public transport infrastructure in Sydney and believe that SydneyLink is a strong step in the right direction. Investment in a public transport solution is absolutely vital for Sydney to retain its global competitiveness.

The Property Council believes the North West Metro will be a more effective transport solution than the previous heavy rail north west link proposal. However, further investment in the heavy rail system is required to ensure that the proposal is more effective than a combined north west heavy rail link to Epping and a Epping to CBD metro rail. The Parramatta to Epping link will be required to ensure the booming business centre of Macquarie Park is not starved of trains and to further defer the need to construct the Harbour Rail Link. We also restate our long standing call for the Government to develop a long term transport plan for Sydney.

The North West Metro provides enormous urban renewal opportunities along the Victoria Road corridor which must be taken up if the Government is to realise its urban growth objectives and metro rail patronage.

The Property Council asks the Government add stations along the proposed route alignment to capture current and future areas of population growth. In the north west, this could take the form of additional stations in Norwest and Kellyville. An additional station at White Bay should be considered in anticipation of future growth in residential and commercial precincts with the departure of car facilities.

The development of the North West Metro will raise considerable funding challenges through to completion in 2017. Robust funding sources are required to meet the most substantial infrastructure development in this generation. We recommend the Government consider US-style Tax Increment Financing as part of this funding mix.

The success of the North West Metro will be contingent on a high quality and efficient operation. We support the Government seeking partnerships with private operators to achieve this. The Government should also ensure that an integrated ticketing system is in place to facilitate seamless connections to other modes of transport.

Recommendations

Sydney's transport needs

- 1. Develop a long term transport plan for Sydney to support urban growth plans and shape the consideration of major new transport projects.**
- 2. Continue to give priority to the delivery of the M4 East (including a Port Botany tunnel), a West Metro incorporating a harbour crossing, and a South East Metro (in that order of priority).**

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North West Metro: Metro Rail versus Heavy Rail

3. Consider the relative merits of the North West Metro and a North Rail Link plus Epping to CBD metro before moving to project approval stage.
4. Analyse the transport network implications of both options (particularly the need to service Macquarie Park and relieve congestion at Town Hall and Wynyard stations) and commit to accompanying network investments which would be required (such as a Parramatta to Epping heavy rail link).

Route Alignment and Stations

5. The Government examine the proposal of additional stations along the current proposed route, especially around high growth areas of Norwest Business Park and Kellyville.
6. The Government consider adding a station at White Bay in anticipation of population growth potential.
7. The Government ensure that the Epping Interchange be well planned to facilitate seamless connections to the heavy rail line.
8. The Government consider a slight alteration of the route to pass through Eastwood instead of Denistone East to capture growth potential.
9. The Government ensure that there are appropriate links to Barangaroo from Wynyard metro station, as well as high quality pedestrian access to Wynyard CityRail station and George Street.
10. The Government ensure that any proposal makes certain that car parking around all stations are sufficient.

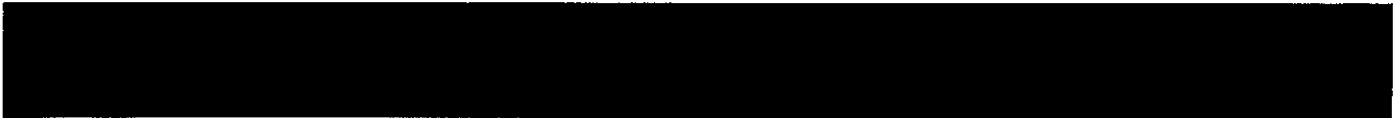
Urban Renewal

11. Create an urban renewal strategy for the North West Metro route to ensure adequate patronage, create improved amenity and deliver housing supply.

Funding

12. The Government adopt Tax Increment Financing to finance metro rail stations and station precinct improvements.
13. The Government investigate the application of a PPP for metro rail operation and development.
14. The Government seek funding assistance from the Federal Government for the SydneyLink transport projects as vital pieces of national infrastructure.

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Operations

15. The Government consider a competitive market place for private investment through private sector operators.
16. The Government continue to seek solutions to an integrated ticketing system which will increase efficiency and quality of Sydney's transport system as a whole.
17. The Government commit to ensuring that the CityRail system is improved, from management to daily maintenance and customer service.

Certainty

18. The Government release more information about the construction challenges of the North West metro rail proposal, including geo-tech condition studies and CBD alignment issues.
19. The Government maintain a consistent transport message and ensure that transport planning be approached in a holistic way.

1. Sydney's Transport Needs

Need for a long term transport plan for Sydney

Investment in transport infrastructure is a critical ingredient to Sydney's economic competitiveness and quality of life for its residents. The Government is to be congratulated in commencing the challenging task of considering the merits of major long term investment in transport infrastructure to secure Sydney's future.

The Government's SydneyLink proposal needs to be considered in the context of Sydney's transport planning needs and urban growth plan.

While the Government has a long term urban growth plan for Sydney – the Metropolitan Strategy – it has no accompanying long term transport strategy. The Government's other relevant planning documents do not fully address this need:

- Urban Transport Statement
- State Infrastructure Strategy
- NSW Budget
- Agency forward capital plans.

The SydneyLink proposal is a four project proposal – of considerable merit – but does not address further system-wide issues. The Property Council repeats its previous calls for the Government to develop a long term transport plan for Sydney to shape the consideration of major new transport projects and urban growth plans.

Key transport needs


In 2006 the Property Council released the report, *Building Wealth through Infrastructure: Setting Priorities and Valuing Gains in NSW*, prepared by the Centre for International Economics. This identified unfunded infrastructure projects valued over \$100 million which would make the greatest contribution to economic growth if built over the next ten years.

This study identified a number of very high priority transport projects which address transport needs relevant for consideration in SydneyLink. These are set out below along with the ranking determined by the project:

Project	Rank
North West Rail Link	(2)
M4 East and M4 to Port Botany Tunnel	(5)
Western Sydney Bus Transitways	(7)
Harbour Rail Link	(8)
Parramatta to Sydney CBD High Speed Train	(14)
Epping to Parramatta Rail Link	(16)
CBD Light Rail Loop	(17)
Inner Suburbs Metro/Light Rail Network	(18)

The SydneyLink proposal is largely consistent with the transport priorities represented by this list of priority projects, with the exception of some cross network linkage issues discussed below.

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Based on this work, we support the priority given to the North West Metro (subject to our comments below) and the subsequent priority given to (in order of priority):

1. M4 East (including a Port Botany motorway tunnel)
2. West Metro incorporating a harbour crossing
3. South East Metro

Recommendations

- 1. Develop a long term transport plan for Sydney to support urban growth plans and shape the consideration of major new transport projects.**
- 2. Continue to give priority to the delivery of the M4 East (including a Port Botany tunnel), a West Metro incorporating a harbour crossing, and a South East Metro (in that order of priority).**

2. North west metro: Metro Rail versus Heavy Rail

A threshold consideration in responding to the North West Metro proposal is the assessment of what mode of transport is most appropriate for the transport task.

The big advantage of the current North West Metro proposal over the Government's previous heavy rail plan is the servicing of the Victoria Road corridor. This is clearly a major enhancement which would deliver considerable benefits to this part of Sydney. Victoria Road is one of Sydney's main bus corridors and recent indications are that it is reached capacity.

The two clear transport options for servicing both the north west growth corridor and the Victoria Road corridor are:

- A. The North West Metro as proposed in SydneyLink, or
- B. The North West Rail Link (heavy rail) as previously proposed, plus a metro rail link from Epping to the CBD.

The key advantages and disadvantages of each option would seem to be the following:

	Advantages	Disadvantages
North West Metro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast services from north west to CBD. Higher passenger capacity than heavy rail. Services Victoria Road corridor. Services Barangaroo. Enables private sector operation for full service. Stabling capacity in north west. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough services to growing business precinct of Macquarie Park (unless Parramatta to Epping Link constructed). Requires interchange for north west residents to access north shore business centres. Does not significantly alleviate congestion for Town Hall and Wynyard stations unless an additional east west heavy rail link (such as the Parramatta to Epping Line or the Harbour Rail Link) is created. Less seating capacity than alternative option (particularly significant for evening commute). Significant project risks of Epping to CBD tunnels and harbour crossings.
North West Rail Link plus Epping-CBD metro rail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows north west residents direct access to north shore business centres. Allows additional stations to be added on inner section without increasing travel times for north west residents. Services Victoria Road corridor. Services Barangaroo. Relieves pressure at Town Hall and Wynyard stations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slower direct access to CBD for north west residents. Requires construction of Harbour Rail Link (considerable capital cost). Less passenger capacity to north west than metro rail. Enables private sector operator for only half of the route. No obvious stabling capacity (without construction of South East Metro). Significant project risks of Epping to CBD tunnels and harbour crossings.

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This analysis indicates that both options are viable yet both have their merits and demerits. Neither option can be achieved without other changes to the transport network.

Obviously the Government has given consideration to these and other issues. The Property Council believes that the analysis behind both options should be released for comprehensive consultation of the North West Metro proposal.

From our analysis it looks likely that the North West Metro will require the construction of either the Parramatta to Epping Line or the Harbour Rail Link in order to relieve cross harbour congestion and congestion at Town Hall and Wynyard stations.

We would therefore support the North West Metro proposal subject to further enhancements to the heavy rail network – probably the Parramatta to Epping Link – to serve the growing Macquarie Park business precinct and relieve pressure on the harbour crossing, Town Hall and Wynyard stations.

Recommendations

- 3. Consider the relative merits of the North West Metro and a North Rail Link plus Epping to CBD metro before moving to project approval stage.**
- 4. Analyse the transport network implications of both options (particularly the need to service Macquarie Park and relieve congestion at Town Hall and Wynyard stations) and commit to accompanying network investments which would be required (such as a Parramatta to Epping heavy rail link).**

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3. Route Alignment and Stations

North west route alignment

The Property Council supports the alignment outlined in the metro rail proposal from Rouse Hill to Epping as it follows the route previously proposed by the Government with heavy rail.

Norwest Business Park is reaching the extent of its expansion with a final land release. Already, over 400 companies and 25,000 people work at Norwest. The current bus transport arrangements are not sustainable, leaving the majority of people working in the precinct to drive to work. We ask that the Government consider the potential for an additional station in the vicinity of Norwest

Kellyville will see further development following the release of new land and is expected to contribute to an increase in population for the Hills District by 40,000 in the next 15-20 years. The new town development will include an extensive shopping precinct, restaurants, a university campus and growers market. Another station should be considered near Kellyville to prepare for this growth.

Epping Interchange

We would ask the Government to ensure that the Epping Interchange be well planned and have sufficient capacity to facilitate the flow of people to and from the metro rail to the heavy rail on the Epping to Chatswood line.

Epping to CBD route alignment

The Property Council supports a metro style rail system from Epping to the Sydney CBD. The Victoria Road corridor is Sydney's most congested and recent studies have suggested that Victoria Road has reached capacity. Topographical and space constraints indicate that an underground public transport option is the logical upgrade.

The alignment should be chosen to optimise redevelopment opportunities and therefore rail patronage. This will not be achieved with the small sites along Victoria Road itself. The Government should consider station placement away from Victoria Road.

We understand the Eastwood Chamber of Commerce propose to modify the route to serve Eastwood instead of Denistone East. Eastwood has a much stronger potential for urban renewal due to site size. There are much higher levels of commercial and retail space 83,000 m² versus 2,100 m² in Denistone East. Also, further population growth is expected in Eastwood from the Eastwood Brickworks, Channel 7, and Eastwood Centre. We believe this warrants support from the Government and that the Chamber's proposal be considered.

White Bay

With the departure of car facilities, White Bay will undergo urban renewal over the next decades. This is likely to include both residential and non-residential uses. We strongly believe this renewal should be supported by a further metro station.

Future Stations

The proposed alignment of the metro rail has potential for additional stations to take advantage of increased densities over time. The Government should investigate future adaptability in new stations for the corridor between Denistone East and Top Ryde in particular.

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Barangaroo

The Government should ensure that this project delivers outstanding pedestrian links to Barangaroo. An estimated 16,000 additional workers will be housed in the new commercial precinct and they need viable public transport solutions if Barangaroo is to be successfully integrated with the CBD.

With a new station to be located between Barangaroo and Wynyard, the station design should incorporate high quality pedestrian access to Wynyard and George Street.

Car parking

The design of metro stations needs to ensure adequate car parking is made available at stations to facilitate park and ride trips. Seven Hills railway station is a good example of an effective facility.

Recommendations

5. **The Government examine the proposal of additional stations along the current proposed route, especially around high growth areas of Norwest Business Park and Kellyville.**
6. **The Government consider adding a station at White Bay in anticipation of population growth potential.**
7. **The Government ensure that the Epping Interchange be well planned to facilitate seamless connections to the heavy rail line.**
8. **The Government consider a slight alteration of the route to pass through Eastwood instead of Denistone East to capture growth potential.**
9. **The Government ensure that there are appropriate links to Barangaroo from Wynyard metro station, as well as high quality pedestrian access to Wynyard CityRail station and George Street.**
10. **The Government ensure that any proposal makes certain that car parking around all stations are sufficient.**

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4. Urban Renewal

The North West Metro provides enormous urban renewal opportunities along the Victoria Road corridor which must be taken up if the Government is to realise its urban growth objectives.

The Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney is premised on the concept of facilitating much of Sydney's growth around public transport corridors. Major new investments such as North West Metro must be accompanied by a land use planning strategy which:

- Significantly increases densities around station locations to ensure adequate patronage of the metro service and to meet Sydney's growth needs;
- Invests in the public domain around station locations to create improved amenity for residents; and
- Deliver adequate housing supply for Sydney.

Work on such a strategy should begin now and be considered an integral part of this project. Obviously this will require close cooperation with relevant councils and consultation with industry and the public.

Recommendation

- 11. Create an urban renewal strategy for the North West Metro route to ensure adequate patronage, create improved amenity and deliver housing supply.**

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5. Funding

The development of the North West Metro will raise considerable funding challenges through to completion in 2017. Robust funding sources are required to meet the most substantial infrastructure development in this generation.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

The Property Council of Australia commissioned Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) in 2007 to advise on how Tax Increment Financing (TIF) could be applied in Australia. A copy of the report is attached in Appendix A.

Used extensively in the United States, TIF allows government to capture increases in tax revenues attributable to an increase in property values within a prescribed development area (TIF district) and use those revenues for neighbourhood renewal projects for a defined period of time.

TIF is used predominantly by local government in the United States. In NSW it is likely that TIF would be more effective if directly controlled by the State Government and were targeted at growth areas of state and regional significance.

PwC tested the viability of TIF in Australia via two case studies. It found that a TIF would repay 75% of a metro rail station and accompanying infrastructure upgrades in the Sydney suburb of Gladesville in 18 years, and 75% of the infrastructure costs of the Sydney south west growth centre in 19 years.

We recommend that the Government adopt TIF to fund part of the metro rail station and precinct that is proposed. It will give an added dimension of funding that would not have previously existed and can free up Government capital for improvements to the rail line itself.

Public Private Partnerships

The Property Council welcomes the use of public-private partnerships to fund public infrastructure where appropriate. The Property Council recommends the Government should consider invite the private sector to own and operate the North West Metro.

Federal funding

The Property Council welcomes the recent Federal Government announced that it would provide \$300 million of funding to assist the development of the M4 East. The M4 East forms part of the Sydney Link transport package.

The NSW Government has already committed the entire \$12 billion capital cost for the North West Metro. We ask that the State Government seek a funding commitment for extensions of the metro rail network west to Parramatta and south east to Malabar from the Federal Government.

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Recommendations

- 12. The Government adopt Tax Increment Financing to finance metro rail stations and station precinct improvements.**
- 13. The Government investigate the application of a PPP for metro rail operation and development.**
- 14. The Government seek funding assistance from the Federal Government for the SydneyLink transport projects as vital pieces of national infrastructure.**

6. Operations

The success of the North West Metro is contingent on the successful day-to-day operation of the system. The Property Council supports Government seeking private operators for the metro rail and fostering competitiveness in public transport operators.

Metro rail operation

Metro rail patronage will depend on the number and location of stations, park and ride facilities, amount of urban density, feeder services, fares and integrated ticketing. The Property Council urges Government to conduct an open consultation process on these matters to ensure that the best options are found.

The Property Council believes that tendering for a private sector operator would be a more appropriate solution than getting an existing state agency to operate.

The operation of metro rail is vital in ensuring it is a success. Whilst other pressures play a role in enticing patrons to leave their cars, a well run metro rail network will best demonstrate a success, both in the eyes of industry and through mass media.

Integrated ticketing

Vital to this proposal is an integrated ticketing system to ensure seamless connections with other modes of transport, particularly the heavy rail interchange at Epping. The Government should continue to pursue integrated ticketing as a priority along with the development of the hard infrastructure itself.

Reforming the CityRail network and operations

While the introduction of a competitive operator would be very positive, the Property Council would strongly urge the Government to reform the existing CityRail network and not abandon this important piece of infrastructure which involves the operation of approximately 2,300 services carrying over 900,000 passengers to and from 302 stations daily.

At the core of this, the Property Council calls on the Government to ensure that the reform priority for CityRail is operational efficiency. For such an important piece of infrastructure, reform must come from all levels of the organisation – from management right down to maintenance work practices and day-to-day operations.

In addition, the network itself must be improved and we urge the continuation of the Rail Clearways program.

Recommendations

- 15. The Government consider a competitive market place for private investment through private sector operators.**
- 16. The Government continue to seek solutions to an integrated ticketing system which will increase efficiency and quality of Sydney's transport system as a whole.**
- 17. The Government stay committed to ensuring that the CityRail system is improved, from management to daily maintenance and customer service.**

7. Certainty of Delivery

As a result of previous changes and abandonment of transport projects, the Property Council members are sceptical about whether this latest infrastructure plan will be delivered.

The market is looking to the Government to provide certainty about their plans for the future. While SydneyLink provides a welcome start in providing an indication of transport infrastructure priorities, more information is needed to enable the strategy to inform and guide businesses planning their investment decisions. Businesses in NSW need confidence that the Government will deliver on their plans if it is to influence their investment decisions.

In addition, there are considerable project risks associated with the North West Metro. The Property Council suggests the Government look at the following strategies to gain widespread support for this worthy transport infrastructure project:

1. Identify the project risks of this infrastructure development and present solutions to these.
2. Industry certainty is best supported through accurate, consistent and clear information.
3. Develop a holistic transport strategy which takes into account the metro rail with other transport investments, particularly the potential for heavy rail from Epping to Parramatta
4. Consult with stakeholders in the property industry, local governments, and business to ensure that any plans are the right solution.
5. Swift action to commence the project within the target timeframes

In addition, there are considerable project risks associated with the North West Metro. We argue that the current proposal for the North West Metro needs more information, particularly around the engineering challenges that this project faces – crossing four waterways and alignment in the CBD taking into account other infrastructure such as water, telecommunications and existing rail tunnels.

Recommendations

18. **The Government release more information about the construction challenges of the North West metro rail proposal, including geo-tech condition studies and CBD alignment issues.**
19. **The Government maintain a consistent transport message and ensure that transport planning be approached in a holistic way.**

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8. Contact

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NSW Component of the Property Council's Infrastructure Australia Submission

The Property Council of Australia welcomes the opportunity to comment on Infrastructure Australia's *Discussion Paper 1: Australia's Future Infrastructure Requirements* released for comment on 2 September 2008. This submission focuses on NSW and forms part of our national submission.

This state's future infrastructure program is currently uncertain. The NSW Government is due to hand down its mini-budget in November and this is likely to include substantial changes to its four-year capital expenditure program. In addition, the latest edition of the State Infrastructure Strategy released in June 2008 provides unclear timeframes and scope of future major infrastructure projects.

We congratulate the Commonwealth Government's commitment to developing a long term infrastructure plan focused on economic, social and environmental priorities based on sound investigative methodology.

This submission makes five key recommendations:

1. **Open transparent methodology** The infrastructure priority list developed by Infrastructure Australia should be based on an open and transparent methodology for prioritising infrastructure needs. The Centre for International Economics has developed a multi-criteria analysis methodology based on a cost benefit analysis for the Property Council in 2006 and we offer this to Infrastructure Australia for its consideration.
2. **Governance reforms to ensure infrastructure and land use decisions go hand in hand** Future infrastructure and land use planning needs must be considered together. Infrastructure Australia should consider improved governance models which leverage off the Commonwealth's financial commitment to achieve this outcome.
3. **Replace State Development Levies with other funding types focusing on efficient infrastructure funding mechanisms** Infrastructure Australia should facilitate the use of the most efficient infrastructure funding mechanisms. Currently the NSW Government has a heavy over-reliance on state infrastructure levies on new development which retard economic growth, while other innovative and more efficient funding methods remain unexplored. The Property Council offers research developed for us by the Allen Consulting Group (comparing the benefits of different funding methods) and PricewaterhouseCoopers (on establishing US-style Tax Increment Financing in Australia).
4. **NSW infrastructure priorities** The following NSW infrastructure projects should receive priority funding through the Building Australia Fund:
 1. Rail Link to North West Sydney (Either North West Metro Rail or North West Heavy Rail link with associated network improvements)
 2. Western Metro or Western Fast Rail
 3. M4 East and M4 to Botany Tunnel
 4. Pacific Highway Upgrades

5. F3 to M2/M7 Freeway Connection
6. Rail Freight (Moorebank Intermodal Facility and further investment in South West and Northern Sydney rail freight corridors)
7. Newcastle Port access (Liverpool Ranges Freight Line)
8. Maldon Dombarton line (Port Kembla Rail Freight Line)
9. F3 to Branxton Freeway Connection
10. CBD and Inner Sydney Light Rail System
11. M5 East Duplication

5. **Longer term project: East coast very fast train** While we recognise that a Brisbane – Sydney – Canberra – Melbourne very fast train network is beyond the capacity of this initial Building Australia Fund, we believe Infrastructure Australia should commission a feasibility analysis of a Newcastle to Canberra very fast train as the initial leg in a Brisbane to Melbourne link. This would support further growth in the Hunter and south western Sydney, serve a potential new Sydney international airport, free up existing passenger lines for greater freight rail priority, and support priority employment locations in Newcastle and Western Sydney.

The infrastructure priorities set out in recommendation 4 above are based on:

- a gap analysis of our 2006 study *Building Wealth Through Infrastructure: Setting Priorities and Valuing Gains in NSW*, prepared for us by the Centre for International Economics,
- the *Revitalising the Convention and Exhibition Industry in Sydney* study prepared for the Property Council and TTF Australia by HVS International in 2007,
- the *Key Infrastructure Priorities for the Hunter Region* produced by the Hunter Infrastructure Alliance (which includes the Property Council) in 2008, and
- the outcomes of the Illawarra infrastructure roundtable in September 2008.

These priorities assume that the NSW Government will fund much needed infrastructure projects which, while vitally important, do not fall into the 'nation building' category which is properly the focus of Infrastructure Australia. Examples of these include: investment in base and peakload power generation (if not undertaken by the private sector), south west rail link (fully funded in the capital forward program), expansion of convention and exhibition facilities at Darling Harbour and Homebush, a Harbour Rail Link (when required) and further public transport improvements.