

**Submission
No 19**

INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Organisation: Greenfields Development Company No.2 Pty Ltd

Date Received: 5 September 2023

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Portfolio Committee No.6 - Transport and the Arts
Legislative Council
NSW Parliament
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
Via email:

Dear Committee Members,

Inquiry into the current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney

As the biggest developer in south-western Sydney by virtue of our combined Oran Park, Pondicherry, Greenway and Aerotropolis land holdings, Greenfields Development Company No.2 Pty Ltd (Greenfields) is uniquely placed to work constructively with Government on important infrastructure issues. Our experience planning and then developing large scale, mixed use masterplanned communities gives us first-hand experience of public transport's important role in making safe, accessible and healthy communities. Our group's landholdings, shown in their regional context, are edged red in Figure 1 overleaf.

Our development projects give us an appreciation of the challenges of designing and then implementing public transport systems. We welcome the opportunity to make a written submission to the Inquiry. We also register our interest in addressing the Committee during public hearings. This submission will focus on the following specific Terms of Reference:

- (a) The availability and accessibility of public transport services across Western Sydney, the adequacy of connectivity between public transport hubs and commercial hubs and any gaps in services;
- (c) The changing nature of public transport needs due to shifting demographics, new suburbs, planned infrastructure and increased density;
- (d) The social, economic and planning impacts of vehicle dependency and poorly integrated public transport
- (g) the role of the public and private sector, including local government and the use of innovative funding models, such as transit oriented development and value capture mechanisms, in public transport provision and
- (i) any other related matters.

We will address these in turn, noting that some of the issues we discuss under one of the Terms of Reference could also be applicable to others. We will also direct our comments to South Western Sydney, where we are progressively developing our extensive land holdings. While some of our comments and observations may apply more generally across Western Sydney, we have prepared them particularly with our experiences in Camden and Liverpool Council areas in mind.

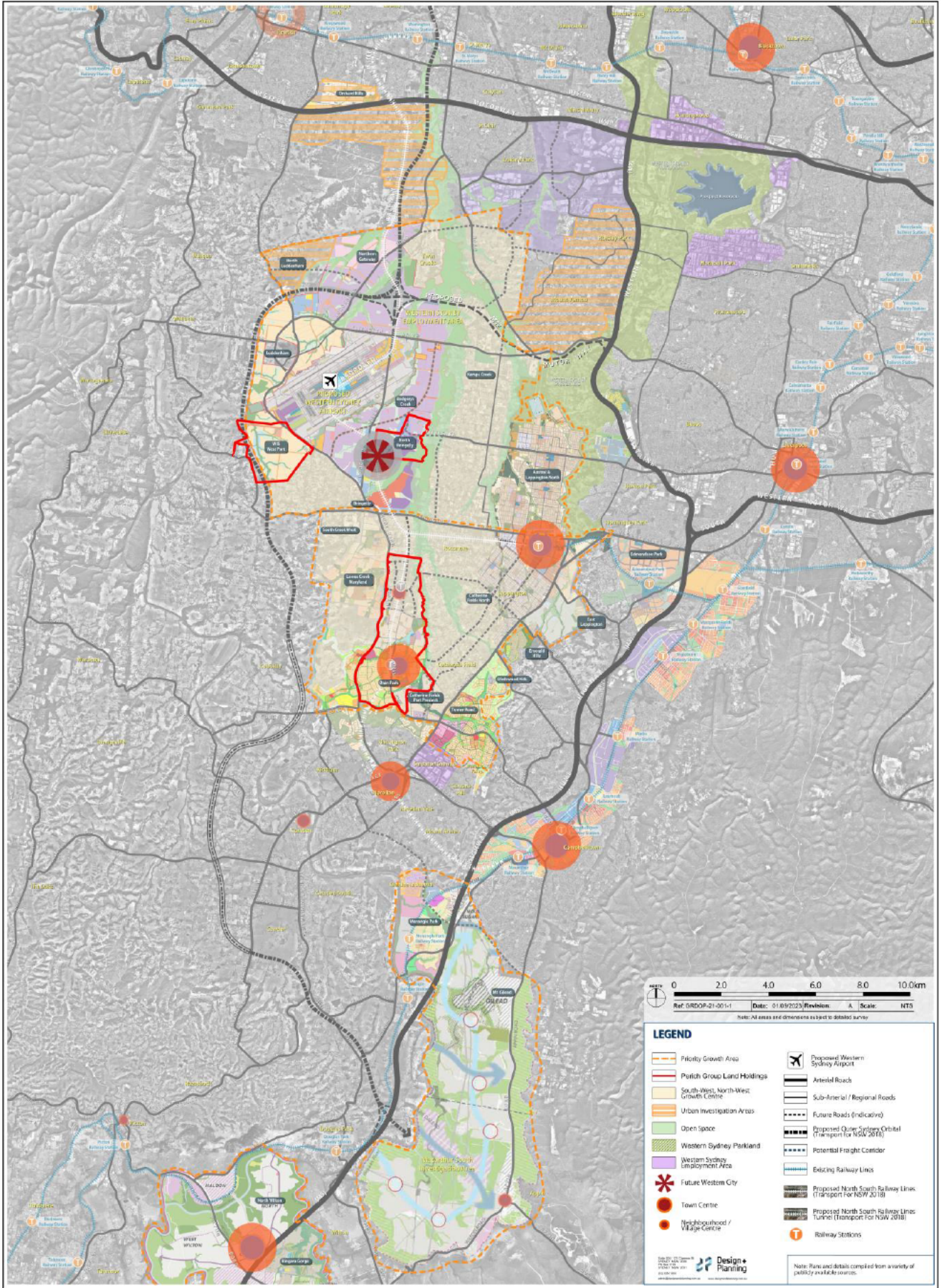


FIGURE 1 – LAND HOLDINGS IN REGIONAL CONTEXT

(a) The availability and accessibility of public transport services across Western Sydney, the adequacy of connectivity between public transport hubs and commercial hubs and any gaps in services

Western Sydney's public transport network reflects the city structure when it was developed: commercial and industrial areas were predominantly located in the eastern portion of the city and residential and then agricultural areas spread into the west. Consequently, Sydney's public transport network is focused on the Central Business District (CBD) as a "hub", and the "spokes" filter out predominantly to what is now Western Sydney, extending in radial lines from the CBD to Windsor, Penrith, Campbelltown and beyond.

The poly-centric city now promoted by urban planners is an attempt to provide jobs closer to where people live. The rise of Parramatta, Liverpool, Penrith and Campbelltown as major employment and service centres is not well served by our existing "hub and spoke" public transport network which still focuses on the CBD. Travel between major Western Sydney centres and the substantial employment areas that have developed around them is far from easy. It is reasonable to think that someone living in Liverpool or Campbelltown may want to work in Penrith. Train and bus connections from the south-west (Campbelltown) to the west (Penrith) require multiple interchanges, are infrequent and time-consuming.

This is why new public transport links such as the North-South Metro, from St Marys to the Aerotropolis, with future links further south to Oran Park and ultimately Macarthur, are so important. Government should continue with the planning for this link and others like it in Western Sydney which facilitate easier north-south movement rather than continuing to focus networks on the CBD.

Western Sydney's growth areas have waited decades for the delivery of reliable public transport services. The North West Growth Sector has been transformed by the completion of the Northwest Metro, but it came nearly three decades after it was first mooted, and 20 years after the first residents had moved in and established their travel patterns in private motor vehicles. The social, economic and environmental consequences of the lag in public transport provision in the North West are well-documented.

The South West Growth Sector has generally followed the same trend, although the Glenfield-Leppington Rail Link is notable for its comparatively early provision. The effect this has had on urban form at Edmondson Park is clear and is an example of how timely infrastructure provision can result in more sustainable urban areas, consistent with the Minns Government's policies on promoting denser development around transport hubs.

With the pain of inadequate public transport in the North West etched into people's memories, and the great example of Edmondson Park as the alternative, it is clear that further public transport networks need to be not only planned, but also constructed, in the South West Growth Sector if we are to avoid the mistakes of the past. The obvious gaps in the current network in the South West are that Leppington is not connected to the Aerotropolis, and the North-South Metro line will initially terminate at Bradfield. While there are plans to join Leppington to Bradfield by rail, and to extend the Metro line from Bradfield to Macarthur via Oran Park and Narellan, there is neither a timing commitment nor a budget commitment to either extension of the network.

Yet, concerning, the areas through which these rail lines will run are expected to produce over 300,000 additional residents, new employment areas and new town centres in the next 20 years. This gap in the network needs to be filled at the earliest possible time to achieve more sustainable urban development outcomes for the South West.

(c) the changing nature of public transport needs due to shifting demographics, new suburbs, planned infrastructure and increased density

As noted above, the demand for improved and more frequent public transport services in the South West Growth Sector will only increase in coming years as more families make this part of Sydney their home. As the largest developer in the South West, we have first-hand experience of cow paddocks literally transforming into new suburbs and communities in very short timeframes. While we have been able to provide new facilities and services for our residents like open spaces, local parks, district level sports fields, libraries and revegetated natural areas, the provision of public transport is not something we are able to easily influence. While we have been able to plan for public transport, the provision of frequent and reliable services noticeably lags demand.

While the South West has experienced phenomenal growth in the last decade, the area is also gearing up for one of the largest economic shifts in modern times when the Western Sydney International airport commences operations in 2026. This will fundamentally change travel patterns in the South West. The “hub and spoke” public transport system that presently exists in the region, which makes it easier to travel to the CBD than it is to travel to nearby suburbs, must be augmented to allow for easier inter-regional travel if the area’s potential is to be realised. In this regard, we are concerned at reports that delivery of the bus-only links to the airport will be delayed and that the extension of the Metro beyond Bradfield is not funded and has no target completion date.

The resident population that was anticipated for the South West Growth Sector when it was planned in 2003/04 will be easily surpassed due to smaller housing lots and an increased acceptance of medium density and apartment living as people struggle to afford detached dwellings. This is despite a continuing trend of fewer person households over the last 20 years. When these increases are added to the jobs boom expected to result from the new airport, it is clear that the South West Growth Sector’s public transport needs will be greater than originally envisaged, simply due to the weight of numbers. Planning and delivery of new public transport networks must reflect this reality.

More specifically related to Camden Council area, extensive areas east and west of The Northern Road are now zoned for development which will occur in the next 10-15 years. These are masterplanned communities, generally under the control of single landowners and developers (Greenfields included), as shown in Figure 2 overleaf. Consequently, rates of development are both quicker and more predictable than in fragmented land holdings such as those in and around the Austral/Leppington area. This includes development for medium and higher density housing which is generally well-coordinated in masterplanned communities. These factors will combine to rapidly increase population in this part of the South West Growth Sector in the next decade, in turn rapidly increasing demand for public transport networks and services.

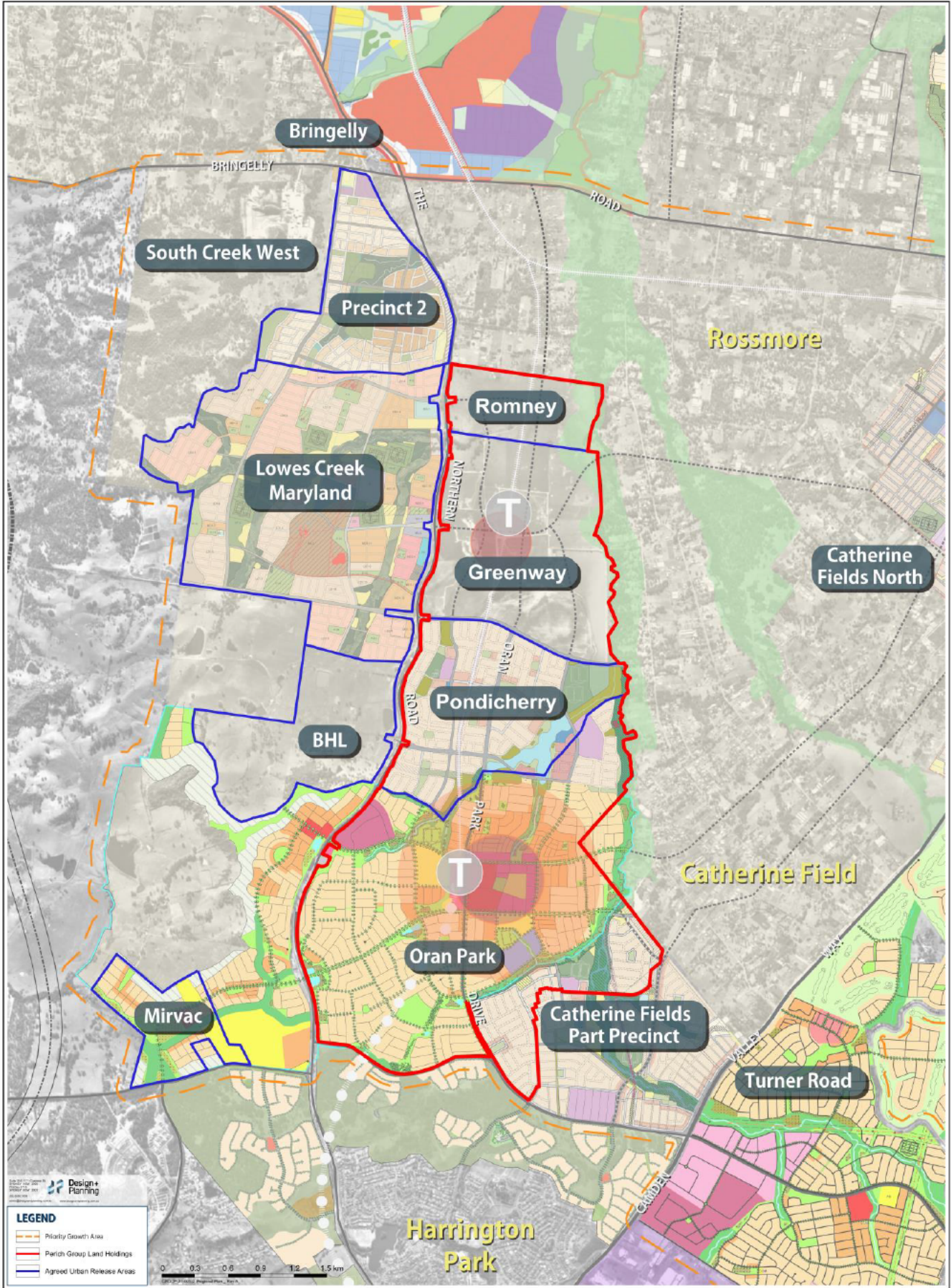


FIGURE 2 – URBAN RELEASE AREAS

(d) the social, economic and planning impacts of vehicle dependency and poorly integrated public transport.

The effects of poorly integrated public transport are well documented by numerous academic studies which show time and again that communities with poorly integrated public transport suffer adverse economic, social and environmental impacts. Aspects borne out by the studies, and underlined by observed experiences in Western Sydney, include:

- Communities without reliable public transport are forced to rely on private vehicles as their primary means of transport
- This often results in households having to own multiple vehicles to service the needs of different family members, with costs extending not only to the purchase of the multiple vehicles, but also their registration, maintenance and running costs including tolls
- These additional transportation costs are often borne by communities who are least able to afford them
- Roads are congested with privately-owned cars completing the daily commute, resulting in longer commute times for drivers compared to areas with good public transport
- Longer commute times impact commuters' abilities to contribute to family and community life and has been shown to adversely affect personal health, and
- More vehicles on the road equates to worse air quality and higher greenhouse gas emissions.

Sydney is a city which is becoming increasingly polarised, despite the best efforts of our city makers and governments. While inroads have been made, Sydney's west is comparatively disadvantaged compared to Sydney's east and demographers and urban planners can easily identify demographic divides such as the so-called "latte-line" which distinguish the two areas. One of the many deficits experienced by those on the 'wrong' side of that line is public transport provision. If Sydney is to become a more equitable city, then addressing the public transport imbalance and providing more reliable, frequent and extensive services in Western Sydney is a key plank to achieving this objective.

(g) the role of the public and private sector, including local government and the use of innovative funding models, such as transit oriented development and value capture mechanisms, in public transport provision.

The corridor for the extension of the Metro line from Bradfield to Macarthur runs through our land holdings, with Oran Park being a future designated stop on this route. Oran Park Town Centre is expected to serve a catchment area of 100,000 people at full development. The Metro rail corridor traverses various of our properties which are either under development (Oran Park and Tranche 41), well-progressed in planning for future urban development (Pondicherry), or are in the early stages of planning for urban development (Greenway and Romney). The corridor runs for 5 kilometers at grade across our properties to the proposed Oran Park station, before entering tunnels to head further south to Narellan and ultimately Macarthur.

State planning controls require that any developments adjoining the corridor are referred to Transport for NSW to obtain that agency's concurrence. For Greenfields, to date this has included commercial, retail and residential apartment buildings in Oran Park Town Centre through to residential subdivisions currently being constructed in Tranche 41. We would like the Committee to know that we have formed a constructive working relationship with Transport for NSW's Corridor Preservation team starting from when the corridor was originally planned about 6 years ago.

Working collaboratively with the Corridor Preservation team, we have been able to ensure our planned development does not impact the corridor and the future provision of the rail infrastructure. We have agreed the best way to set aside future construction logistics land in Oran Park Town Centre to make construction of the Metro line and associated infrastructure as easy as possible when the time comes. We have also been able to agree a vertical alignment for the Metro line as it traverses our land.

This has allowed us to make sure the corridor will drain naturally when the rail infrastructure is provided in the future, and has enabled us to agree the location and configuration of a number of important crossings of the corridor (vehicle and pedestrian) so that the future community is not faced with an impenetrable barrier caused by the Metro line. Our collaboration with the Corridor Preservation team has also allowed us to set future landforms on either side of the corridor so that when the rail cutting occurs, the embankments of the cutting form the acoustic barriers to the Metro rail line. This largely removes the need for intrusive noise/acoustic walls in the future urban areas.

This constructive relationship means we have been able to make sure that none of our development activities pose any threat to the Metro's future construction and allows us to move forward confidently with our own development plans. We believe our collaboration means that when the time comes to construct the Metro, it will be easier and more cost effective to build. This is due to factors such as the alignment through our properties being at surface, and the careful planning and placement of services for our adjoining residential subdivisions means expensive service relocations will not be required.

Our existing town centre at Oran Park and a proposed centre at Greenway are both mindful of the challenges and opportunities the Metro provides. With excellent pedestrian connections to each of the town centres, we are committed to realising residential and employment densities expected of centres enjoying direct access to the Metro network.

The State's continued ability to work collaboratively with private landowners and developers will be vitally important for the successful construction and operation of planned public transport infrastructure. We commend the collaborative approach of the Corridor Preservation team to date and hope we can build on this relationship as we continue development of our substantial land holdings in the South West.

(h) any other related matters.

On the topic of on-going collaboration, we believe that the southern extension of the Metro line from Bradfield to Leppington and to Oran Park should be prioritised to serve the substantial population in this part of Sydney. Extensive residential and employment areas will be opened up east and west of The Northern Road in the next decade, adding to our existing residential and employment populations. While there is a commitment to investigate extending the Metro rail network from Bradfield to Leppington, there is no such commitment for any southern extension of the route to Oran Park and beyond.

We would like the Committee to be aware that we are motivated to see a southern extension of the line to Oran Park planned, and implemented if possible, as soon as practicable. We will be progressively developing the areas adjoining the corridor in the next 15-20 years and believe we are able to help the Government bring forward planning and delivery of this part of the rail line. This would connect Oran Park directly to the Aerotropolis via the Metro rail system, addressing the area's public transport deficiencies discussed elsewhere in our submission.

Even if the Government committed to connecting Oran Park to Bradfield via the Metro today, it is important to note that by the time that link is completed most of our Oran Park Town Centre and the other masterplanned communities will be fully developed. Therefore, planning and committing to constructing this link, as soon as possible, is essential to make sure that the community is served by decent public transport networks. We must not repeat the mistakes of the North West Growth Sector. We look forward to further discussions with the Government and Transport for NSW on this matter.

The need for better public transport in Western Sydney is strong and tied inextricably to Sydney being a more equitable and livable city. While the State clearly has a role to play in addressing this issue, we also believe private sector developers such as Greenfields can play an important part in achieving better public transport outcomes for the Western Sydney community.

We would be pleased to elaborate on this matter, and any others raised in our submission, during the public hearing stage. If it's helpful to the Committee's deliberations, we would also be happy to host a site visit by the Committee to Oran Park. If this is of interest, please contact the undersigned on mobile [redacted] to make the necessary arrangements.

We appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to this Inquiry. We hope the issues raised in our submission will assist Government to prioritise decisions and funding to address a critical public transport inequity that is holding Western Sydney back.

Yours sincerely,

Mick Owens
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Greenfields Development Company No. 2 Pty Ltd