

**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC  
TRANSPORT NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY**

**Name:** Ms Ally Dench  
**Date Received:** 18 September 2023

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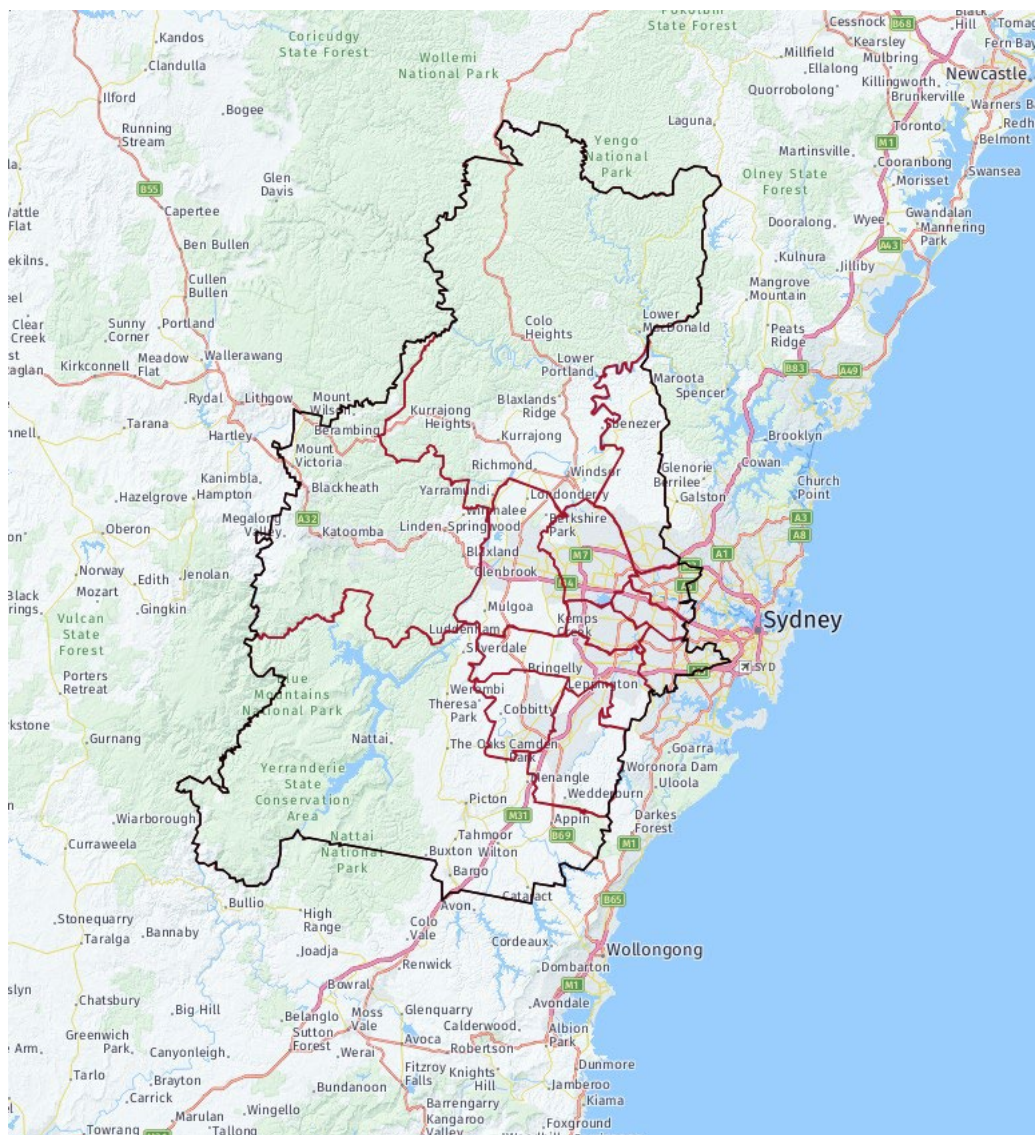
# Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and the Arts

September 2023

## **Inquiry into and report on the current and future public transport needs for Western Sydney**

**Submission – Ally Dench - resident**

### **Western Sydney**



#### *My recognition and commitment:*

In the spirit of reconciliation, I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I thank the Portfolio Committee No. 6 - Transport and the Arts, for their inquiry into the current and future public transport needs for Western Sydney and value the opportunity to make a submission and give evidence to the inquiry.

I am a committed and concerned resident of Western Sydney advocating for people who are experiencing disadvantage. I have more than 30 years' experience across all levels of government and the not-for-profit sector in NSW, and in particular Western Sydney. I have a human-centered focus and a desire to develop the capacity and capability of my local communities.

I believe just societies realise human rights and leave no one behind. By working together in a collaborative partnership approach ideas will be leveraged, and amazing outcomes can be delivered for our communities.

It is in daily life where a just society begins. Notions of fairness, equity and respecting the voice of those that are often not heard, will be the measure of how just our society is.

Unfortunately, the voices of our most marginalised and vulnerable people are often silenced in favour of those with more wealth, cultural influence, and political power. I am making this submission in the hope these voices will be heard.

I thank the committee for looking into the current and future public transport needs for Western Sydney and hope the findings and recommendations will ensure the protection of everyone's civil, political, economic, cultural, social and human rights to access this essential service.

The priority areas this submission is advocating the Committee to consider, and address, are:

- Quality public transport outcomes that focus on people's inclusion and how the current public transport inequities impact upon their everyday lives,
- The escalating growth impacts in Western Sydney and equitable resource allocation to enable access to public transport services,
- The need to factor where people live and social impacts into cost-benefit analysis of transport infrastructure projects, and
- Evidence based resource allocations that deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes and create a more inclusive society.

I would welcome and appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the above priority areas for change and can be contacted at

### **Defining Western Sydney**

The Western Sydney Region includes the thirteen local government areas of Blacktown City, Blue Mountains City, Camden Council, Campbelltown City, The City of Canterbury Bankstown, Cumberland Council, Fairfield City, Hawkesbury City, Liverpool City, The City of Parramatta, Penrith City, The Hills Shire and Wollondilly Shire<sup>1</sup>.

Western Sydney contains approx. 10% of Australia's population, and 51% of Sydney's population.

In the 10 years to 2021 alone, Western Sydney's population grew by more than 20%, double the rate of growth compared with the rest of New South Wales<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://profile.id.com.au/cws/about>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/budget-papers/western-sydney/our-vision-western-sydney>

The Department of Planning and Environment population projections<sup>3</sup>, and Common Planning Assumptions projections predict unprecedented significant growth in the region over the next 20 years, between 2021 and 2041.

High growth is expected in the following areas with the population projections for 2041 at:

- Blacktown City – 492,241 (increased 110,245 people)
- Blue Mountains – 83,951 (increased 4,578 people)
- Camden LGA – 197,735 (increased 89,827 people)
- Campbelltown LGA – 229,301 (increased 54,640 people)
- The City of Canterbury Bankstown – 446,102 (increased 65,034 people)
- Cumberland Council – 304,595 (increased 61,184 people)
- Fairfield – 247,803 (increased 37,000 people)
- Hawkesbury – 77,211 (increased 9,739 people)
- The Hills Shire – 284,292 (increased 100,361 people)
- Liverpool LGA – 232,303 (increased 80,350 people)
- The City of Parramatta – 390,302 (increased 129,351 people)
- Penrith LGA – 270,477 (increased 54,402 people)
- Wollondilly LGA – 90,356 (increased 36,317 people)

In total the projected additional people in 2041 for Western Sydney will be 833,028

#### Western Sydney - 2023:

<b>2,657,223</b> Population	<b>8,982</b> sq kms Land Area	<b>295.9</b> persons per sqkm Population Density	<b>930,566</b> Dwellings
<b>1.36%</b> Population Growth			
<b>52% of</b> households access 2 or more vehicles	<b>40.9%</b> Born overseas	<b>222,475</b> people reported difficulty speaking English.	<b>43.4%</b> travelled to work in a private car <b>5%</b> took public transport <small>*On census day 2021</small>
<b>54,509</b> <b>2.1%</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> largest</b> Economy in Australia	<b>\$220 p/wk</b> Tolls for travel to and from the City from the West	<b>5.8%</b> needing assistance with core activities, compared with 5.2% for Greater Sydney.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/populations>

Compared to NSW, Western Sydney has:

- a greater proportion of young people and children
- low-income families who are dependent on childcare as most parents' work
- higher proportions of people with profound or severe disabilities
- higher proportion of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities
- higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- people living in the lowest Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) of NSW, indicating significant disadvantage
- a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) below the median score of 15 with the lower third of LGAs having a score of between two (Wollondilly) and ten (Liverpool).
- the Camden Local Government Area, at the heart of Western Sydney, one of Australia's fastest growing LGAs with a population growth of 6.2% and a 10-year average of 7%.
- on average, residents are traveling 26 kilometres, compared with approx. 9 kilometres in Inner Sydney, and spend up to 4 hours a day commuting, compared with average commute times of 71 minutes across Greater Sydney.
- had an increase of 31,474 lone person households between 2016 and 2021, one of the largest changes in family/household types

The impact of social isolation on mental health outcomes can be profound and this is especially true when it is combined with loneliness. Social connection between people is important for mental health and contributes to an improved quality of life. Barriers such as distance, transportation, cost, language barriers, cultural differences, and discriminatory practices limit a person's ability to access necessary public transport services and care.

It is essential to acknowledge and address existing deficiencies and equity of access to public transport services and build capacity to match the growth that is already underway in Western Sydney.

Urban development in Priority Growth areas such as Glenfield, Greater Macarthur, Greater Penrith to Eastern Creek, Leppington, Penrith Lakes, South Creek West, South West Growth Area, Western Sydney Aerotropolis, Greater Macarthur and Wilton are driving this growth, placing extra demand on the current public transport system that fails to meet our residents travel needs.

Areas with high historic disadvantage correlate with lower infrastructure provision<sup>4</sup>

The inequitable distribution of public transport infrastructure and associated services across urban areas in Western Sydney<sup>5</sup> has a disproportionately adverse effect on lower income households. The distribution of areas of most severe disadvantage is found in Western Sydney LGAs<sup>6</sup> particularly in the local government areas of Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Liverpool, Blacktown and Penrith. Within Sydney, access to public transport infrastructure is similarly geographically concentrated and skewed to areas with higher incomes<sup>7</sup>.

The McKell Institute has highlighted the need to close the gap on public transport infrastructure inequality that disproportionately affects Western Sydney.<sup>8</sup> The built environment influences and

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<sup>4</sup> [https://mckellinstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/McKell\\_Super-Funding-Infrastructure.pdf](https://mckellinstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/McKell_Super-Funding-Infrastructure.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Hurni A., Transport and social exclusion in Western Sydney -

[https://australasiantransportresearchforum.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2005\\_Hurni.pdf](https://australasiantransportresearchforum.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2005_Hurni.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/socio-economic-indexes-areas-seifa-australia/latest-release>

<sup>7</sup> [https://mckellinstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/McKell\\_Super-Funding-Infrastructure.pdf](https://mckellinstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/McKell_Super-Funding-Infrastructure.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

impacts upon health and wellbeing outcomes<sup>9 10</sup> through issues such as transport disadvantage and social exclusion, both directly and indirectly.

Access to safe public transport is a social determinant of health<sup>11 12 13</sup>.

There are geographic disparities in Western Sydney where there is limited-service availability, people must travel distances, and there is poor connectivity between transport hubs and commercial hubs.

The less dense parts of Western Sydney, which do not yet support viable public transport are locked into car dependency with no alternative options for them to get to health services, work, school, to the shops, or visit friends and family<sup>14</sup>.

Bus networks are a common mode of public transport in Western Sydney and many areas are underserved by train, Metro and light-rail services, particularly in the growth areas. There is limited "last-mile" connectivity through associated transport services like feeder buses, cycling lanes, pedestrian pathways, and park-and-ride facilities.

Accessibility to services for different groups of people in transport disadvantaged areas will require innovative thinking and different public transport solutions to enable better health and wellbeing outcomes and redress social exclusion.

With the impending population growth, it is critical the NSW's public transport system is tailored to the evolving needs of the community in Western Sydney, particularly through cross-sector collaboration, to be able to make any measurable impact. If this doesn't happen it is going to cost us more than dollars in the long term to fix the issues that come with inequity.

Following is evidence to the specific areas the inquiry is focusing on, highlighting the current inequity gap in public transport service provision and the historical inequitable lower per capita resource allocation in Western Sydney for this essential service.

***(a) 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***

Due to the geographical disparities in Western Sydney residents experience longer trip distances, making it hard for public transport services to have competitive service levels or travel times.

Building out Sydney's metro network and connecting more and more people with better and more frequent transport options is essential<sup>15</sup>.

The constant train and bus driver strikes in 2021 and 2022 have decreased the confidence of many people to use public transport and poor connections between public transport modes result in

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/746ded57-183a-40e9-8bdb-828e21203175/aihw-aus-221-chapter-4-2.pdf.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> <https://cityfutures.ada.unsw.edu.au/documents/97/11HBEPLiteraturereview-5-2BECommunities.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/44749/9789241502580\\_eng.pdf](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/44749/9789241502580_eng.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/social-determinants-of-health>

<sup>13</sup> Brown, V., Barr, A., Scheurer, J. et al. Better transport accessibility, better health: a health economic impact assessment study for Melbourne, Australia. *Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act* 16, 89 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-019-0853-y>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/content/dam/digital/images/centre-for-western-sydney/WesternSydneyProgressandProspects.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/content/dam/digital/images/centre-for-western-sydney/WesternSydneyProgressandProspects.pdf>



cumulative waiting times and unreasonable travel times. As a result, people choose to drive to achieve greater travel certainty and safety.

A key limiting factor for public transport use is poor walkability for transport. Pedestrian friendly infrastructure is critical in the designing phase of the urban environment as pedestrian-friendly design around transport hubs encourages walking, which supports healthier lifestyles and reduces congestion.

Figure 1 demonstrates the disparity in walkability between LGAs in Western Sydney and those in Inner and Eastern Sydney.

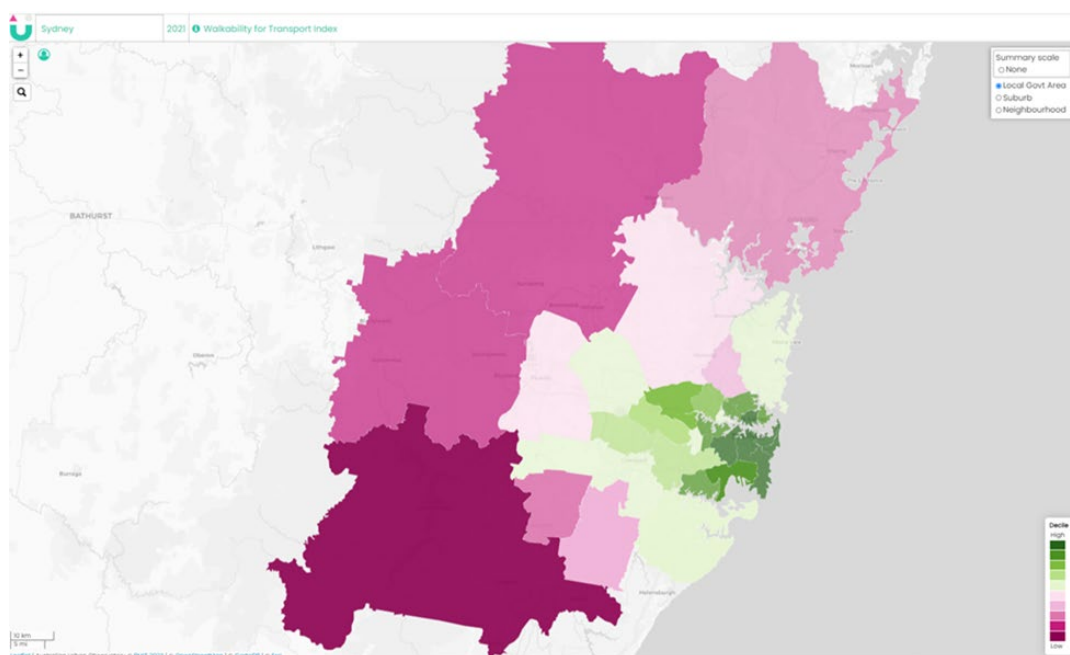


Figure 1. Walkability for Transport Index. (source AUO.org.au)

In many areas of Western Sydney, access to a public bus service is limited, and Figure 2 shows suburbs with poor access to a bus stop within 400m of their home

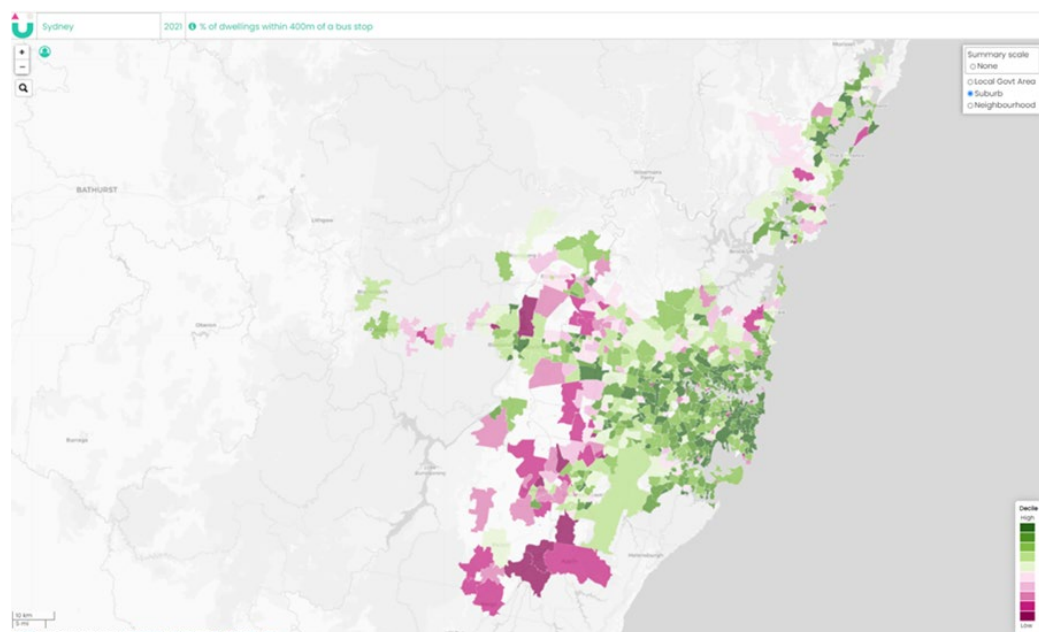
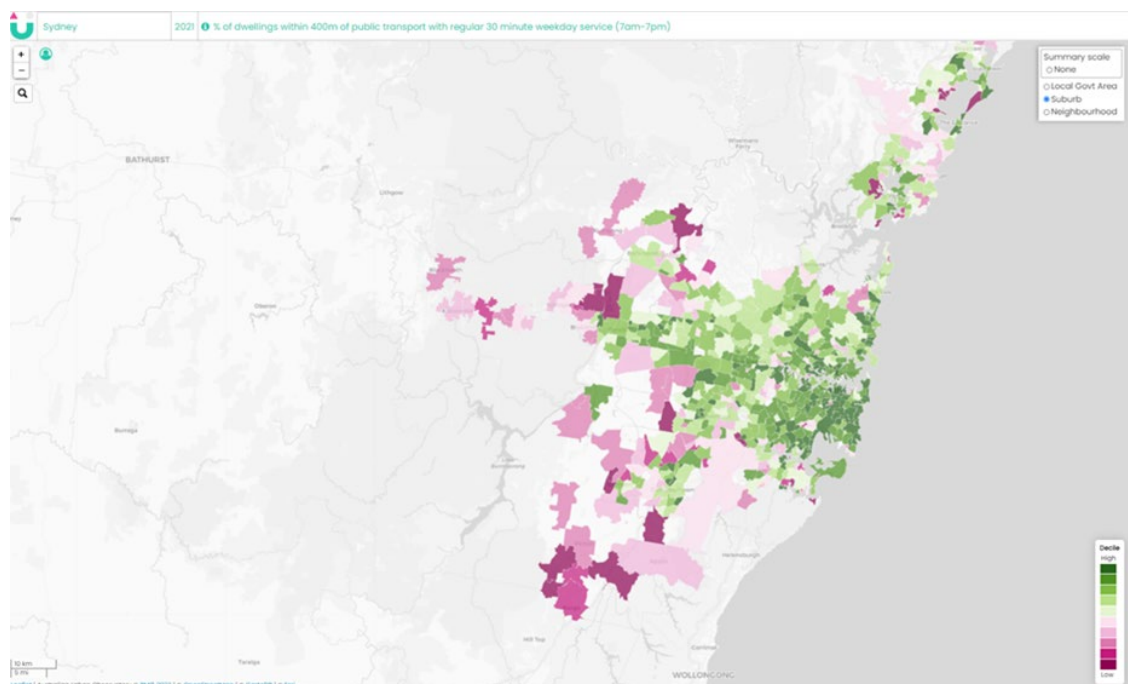


Figure 2 - % dwellings within 400m of a bus stop (source AUO.org.au)

Even with good access to a public transit stop (bus or train), there are large areas of Western Sydney where people do not have a regular public transport service at least every 30 minutes between 7am and 7pm on a weekday (see Figure 3).



*Figure 3 - % of dwellings within 400m of public transport with regular 30-minute weekday service (7am-7pm) (source AUO.org.au)*

Poor interconnectivity within Western Sydney<sup>16</sup> creates a higher rate of car dependency and residents use less active transport options when compared to other residents living in NSW.

The bulk of people's travel takes place within the region, not between the west and the CBD. Many journeys involve multiple destinations and activities, and much travel takes place outside of the weekday morning and afternoon peaks.

A comprehensive, integrated public transport system is essential. Public transport options in Western Sydney have suffered from years of under-investment<sup>1718</sup> and filling the gaps in the existing network is essential.

What is needed is the addition of public transport lines between town centres in Sydney's west to improve access and connectivity within the region<sup>19</sup>. A key part of the long-range transport plan needs to be connecting centres within Western Sydney with each other and use the network of town centres and rail stations to focus growth into compact, walkable formats.

The combination of Public Transport and Active Transport planning and infrastructure is critical to enabling healthier, safer, and more accessible communities.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2018/wsrns-outcomes-report-mar-2018.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> [file:///profiles/users\\$/adench/Downloads/09Sep\\_Submission\\_Social\\_Exclusion\\_Transport\\_Challenge%20\(1\).pdf](file:///profiles/users$/adench/Downloads/09Sep_Submission_Social_Exclusion_Transport_Challenge%20(1).pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-03-07/iveson-western-sydney-transport/4557568>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/content/dam/digital/images/centre-for-western-sydney/WesternSydneyProgressandProspects.pdf>



Currently public transport infrastructure expenditure is too heavily weighted toward motorways and roads. Investment into heavy and light rail is a must if we are to continue to meet people's needs<sup>20</sup>. The financial benefits of smaller public transport projects in transport disadvantaged urban fringe suburbs, can lead to benefits such as lower crime, increased employment, better health outcomes and improved social inclusion. This should be factored into cost-benefit analysis of public transport projects<sup>21</sup>. While building roads is a focus that allows residents to travel faster, such a focus expands a city and encourages people to travel further not more local, providing less social inclusion benefit<sup>22</sup>.

There has been some good local initiatives and investment in local streets at a place-based level within Western Sydney which are more walkable and accessible by cycling that will enable greater social, health and wellbeing, environmental and cultural benefits. More of this needs to happen across Western Sydney.

***(b) current and anticipated levels of demand for public transport services and the public transport requirements to meet this demand***

Many years of under-investment in public transport provision, has left the Western Sydney Region struggling to adequately cater for the needs of residents. The urban growth and new development front is a 72km corridor across Western Sydney which is unprecedented for any greenfield area in Australia<sup>23</sup>.

The demographic profile of the growing population must be considered in public transport service planning by:

- acknowledging the ageing population,
- changes in lifestyle,
- socio-economic disadvantage,
- the Aboriginal population,
- the diversity of cultural backgrounds and
- the rates of mental health and chronic illnesses associated with socio-economic disadvantage<sup>24</sup>

There are more vulnerable sections of the Western Sydney community, with high levels of need that are reliant on a poor accessible public transport network. Public transport services to Western Sydney outside of peak times are poor or non-existent.

Essential workers doing fare str work cannot get trains after midnight and before 4am, and bus services are hourly or less, so workers and young people without a vehicle or driver's licence can't get home safely after shifts<sup>25</sup>.

In the Peri Urban areas of Western Sydney, access to public transport is complex and challenging. Wollondilly is the most transport disadvantaged area in the Greater Sydney Metropolitan Region in terms of daily travel time, average journey to work time, and vehicle kilometres travelled per

<sup>20</sup> Greater Cities Commission. <https://greatercities.au/pulse-of-greater-sydney-2020/pi-2-30-minute-city>

<sup>21</sup> Alison Ziller & Peter Phibbs (2003) Integrating social impacts into costbenefit analysis: a participative method: case study: the NSW area assistance scheme, Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal, 21:2, 141-146, DOI: 10.3152/147154603781766365

<sup>22</sup> Stanley J.K, Hensher D.A., Stanley J.R 2022 Place-based disadvantage, social exclusion and the value of mobility, Transportation Research Part A: Policy & Practice , Vol 160 June 2022 pgs 11-133 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tr.2022.04.005>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.wpca.sydney/assets/Western-Parkland-City-Blueprint.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/chronic-conditions-and-multimorbidity>

<sup>25</sup> GWS Health Partnership Staff Travel Survey – conducted May 2021

person<sup>26</sup>. When compared to the Greater Sydney Region, Wollondilly Shire residents travel the furthest and spend the greatest amount of time on their daily commuting<sup>27</sup>. There are no electrified rail services in Wollondilly and residents are dependent upon a diesel service that is slow and unreliable. Currently, commuters from Wollondilly face a two-hour rail commute to Sydney for a drive that takes around 60 minutes. Public and alternate transport arrangements are poor in Wollondilly Shire, with limited bus services and infrequent diesel train services that terminate at Campbelltown.

Investment in public transport options has not kept pace with the region's growth and limited public transport options lead to:

- Social exclusion and time-poor lifestyles
- Environmental impacts
- Economic inefficiency
- Reduced public health

Better access to current public transport networks, improved bus routing that link residential areas directly to main urban precincts, an increased workforce capacity and more bus and rail services are needed in Western Sydney. This is critical to address the current need and demand that will come from the impending population growth.

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

New growth areas are being developed with little regard to access to public transport. The current growth areas in Western Sydney are focused on car dependent communities and rapid bus is currently the focus of public transport options for these new communities.

The scale and rapid rate of change occurring across Western Sydney and the associated cost of servicing it is causing inequities in public transport provision to our residents. Rapid urbanisation is outpacing the development of public transport infrastructure and new communities and suburbs lack adequate public transportation options, leading to longer commute times and limited access to essential services. Some areas in Western Sydney have limited or no access to public transport options, leaving residents in these areas reliant on private cars, which are costly and less environmentally sustainable.

Developing new public transport infrastructure requires significant investment. There are gaps in public transport infrastructure and cross-sector collaboration and investment is critical. Integrated land-use and transport planning will help ensure new developments are designed with access to public transport in mind. The implementation of transit-oriented development (TOD) principles within these new growth areas will encourage the creation of communities with easy access to public and active transport options.

Our growing and shifting population will require more public and active transport services as well as health, education, utilities, community and social infrastructure. To facilitate this, transport corridors

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/assets/Documents/Resident-Services/Transport/Increase-passenger-capacity-and-rail-services-and-access-to-other-public-transport-initiatives-Final-Draft-August-2018.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/assets/Documents/Resident-Services/Transport/Trax-to-the-Future-A-Rail-Symposium-Information-Booklet.pdf>

and the early identification and investment in land is required to support transport associated services<sup>28</sup>.

Integration of employment hubs with transport and residential areas are also critical to help reduce commuting times and enhance work-life balance in Western Sydney.

With the projected population growth rates over the next 20 years, there is potential for disparity and inequity in funding which can further exacerbate the inequitable provision of public transport in Western Sydney. Prioritising public transport investments and funding to expand public transport services, build new infrastructure, and improve service quality in Western Sydney's rapidly growing areas will help mitigate inequities.

Our aging population will require more accessible and comfortable public transport options, with features such as low-floor buses, ramps, and clear signage.

Rapid Bus services are being relied upon to address the growing need for public transport. This option will require dedicated bus lanes to provide efficient and reliable services. Many roads in Western Sydney do not have the necessary width and infrastructure to support bus rapid transit (BRT) lanes and stations, and many require significant modifications or expansions such as traffic signal priority for buses, and other measures to keep buses moving. A successful rapid bus system would need to address traffic congestion issues to ensure efficient and reliable services as well as careful planning and coordination with local government.

Innovative solutions such as exploring vans or minibuses to serve specific routes or areas, ridesharing, and "On-Demand" responsive services<sup>29</sup> can provide flexible transport options in areas with limited public transport options. "On-Demand" public transport issues are reliant on data driven decision-making and technology integration for trip booking, route optimisation, and real-time tracking of vehicles. The success of these types of innovative public transport service options depends on factors like effective route planning, pricing models, integration with existing transit services and passengers being digitally literate and being able to track the location of their ride in real time possibly through a mobile app.

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

To address existing inequities and combatting the social, economic, and planning impacts of vehicle dependency, a wholistic approach to public transport planning, focusing on placing people's needs at the centre, will support and improve the wellbeing of families and communities across Western Sydney.

Currently transport and access to services consistently feature in the top five issues of Local Governments Community Strategic Planning processes across the LGAs of Western Sydney.

Poorly integrated public transport services have led to vehicle dependency and transport disadvantage. Our residents have difficulty accessing transport because of cost, availability of services, poor physical accessibility and difficulties associated with maintaining private transport (e.g., financial stress related to the cost of petrol, car insurance, car purchase, maintenance, and repairs).

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<sup>28</sup>[https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2018/CP0040\\_WSC\\_Summary\\_WCAG\\_v2.pdf](https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2018/CP0040_WSC_Summary_WCAG_v2.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <https://transportnsw.info/travel-info/ways-to-get-around/on-demand>

Transport disadvantage and vehicle dependency is experienced by a cross section of Western Sydney residents including families with young children, people with a disability and Indigenous Australians and is common in specific geographical locations such as the Western Sydney Periurban or “fringe” areas.

Our young people are often forgotten and not heard. In December 2021, the National Youth Commission Australia heard three reasons why young people are susceptible to transport disadvantage<sup>30</sup>. These were:

- Young people tend to earn less than their older colleagues so fewer can afford to own or run a car and public transport fares represent a higher proportion of their income.
- Young people are less likely to have a driver licence than their older colleagues, particularly those without family support.
- Young people without a car or licence are limited by inadequate public transport, particularly in rural, regional, and urban fringe communities.

In Western Sydney transport disadvantage and unemployment create a vicious cycle of disadvantage where often a young person can’t get a job without transport but can’t afford to get a licence or run a car without a job.

The availability and affordability of public transport impacts upon Western Sydney’s children and young people’s capacity to engage with school, employment, key services, sport, hobbies, interests, and other social and recreational activities. Families that are vehicle dependant are more likely to relate to the stresses of owning and maintaining a vehicle and are more likely to be more restricted than other families who live within walking distance of venues and activities and don’t have a car<sup>31</sup>

When private vehicle access and public transport is lacking, unsafe or unreliable, it has a disproportionate impact on children and young people's lives. Public transport offers a convenient and cheap way for children and young people to travel without needing a car and a driver’s license, or relying on parents, friends, and caregivers for their transportation needs.

Our most vulnerable cohorts in Western Sydney such as young women, LGBTQIA+ young people, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those with a disability are most likely to report feeling unsafe on public transport.

A study of Older Aboriginal people in Western Sydney experiencing the transport system identified when using transport, participants had to negotiate several barriers, including the rules and procedures of the transport system, temporal complexity and uncertainty, stigma, and condescension. Many of our older residents struggle to navigate public transport particularly when using a walking aid.<sup>32</sup>

A concentration of low-income households in outer-urban areas, coupled with poor public transport infrastructure, means that people least able to afford private transport are also living in the areas with the most inadequate public transport services<sup>33</sup>. Poor public transport and an increase in the cost-of-living impacts upon the affordability of private vehicles. This is exacerbated by the need to

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<sup>30</sup> <https://nycinquiry.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Youth-Transport-Guarantee.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> [https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/rs4\\_2.pdf](https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/rs4_2.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Ma T, Ivers R, Solar J, Simon A, de Leeuw E, Clapham K. Experiences of Older Aboriginal People in Navigating Transport Systems in an Urban Setting: An Indigenous Perspective on Transport Access, a Social Determinant of Health. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2022 Oct 23;19(21):13778. doi: 10.3390/ijerph192113778. PMID: 36360658; PMCID: PMC9655690.

<sup>33</sup> [https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/rs4\\_2.pdf](https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/rs4_2.pdf)

travel further distances to get to places of employment, services and activities<sup>34</sup> in turn having grave social, economic, health and well-being impacts upon the most vulnerable in our Western Sydney community.

A significant proportion of our Western Sydney residents living in the less dense areas are vulnerable to oil price fluctuations and interest rate increases, and they bear a greater burden of the cost of congestion. Our residents are experiencing “forced car ownership”, where households are forced to own more than one car due to lack of alternative transport choices<sup>35</sup>.

Car dependence has an environmental downside and a significant impact on household budgets in the form of car purchase, maintenance, petrol and tolls. With congested roads, car travel soaks up increasing amounts of time as well as money and generates stress due to its unreliability - trip times can vary widely depending on traffic conditions.

While cars allow for increased mobility and convenience, and technology has led to cars that are less polluting, a high level of dependence on cars for transport has a range of implications for our resident’s health and the health of our environment<sup>36</sup>.

Our car-dependent suburbs and villages across Western Sydney have poor access to public transport, health services, employment services and shops. Services are often located far distances from where people live, and most are not within walking or cycling range.

The ‘walkability’ of an area is an important influence on social connectedness, sustainability, physical activity, and health outcomes. The Walkability Index has an average of 0. A negative result indicates low/poor walkability, and a positive result indicates high/good walkability. The walkability index for WestInvest LGAs is -0.7 with the Western Sydney PeriUrban areas of Wollondilly, Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains having a score of -2.8, -2.3 and -2.0. LGA’s ‘walkability’ in Western Sydney diminishes the further it is from the Sydney CBD<sup>37</sup>(figure 4a & 4b)

Table 5.2: Walkability Index scores for individual WestInvest LGAs, the WestInvest and non-WestInvest regions, 2021.

Local Government Area	Walkability Index Score <sup>1</sup>
Wollondilly	-2.8
Blue Mountains	-2.3
Hawkesbury	-2.0
Camden	-1.9
Campbelltown	-1.2
Penrith	-1.1
The Hills Shire	-1.0
Liverpool	-0.8
Blacktown	-0.7
<b>Average WestInvest LGAs</b>	<b>-0.7</b>
Strathfield	-0.4
Fairfield	0.2
Cumberland	0.3
Parramatta	0.3
Canterbury-Bankstown	0.4
<b>Average Non-WestInvest LGAs</b>	<b>1.7</b>
Burwood	2.2

Sources: AVO (2022).

<sup>1</sup>Average is 0 - negative results indicate low/poor walkability and a positive result indicates high/good walkability.

Figure 4a – Walkability Index Scores for Individual WestInvest LGAs

<sup>34</sup> [https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/rs4\\_2.pdf](https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/rs4_2.pdf)

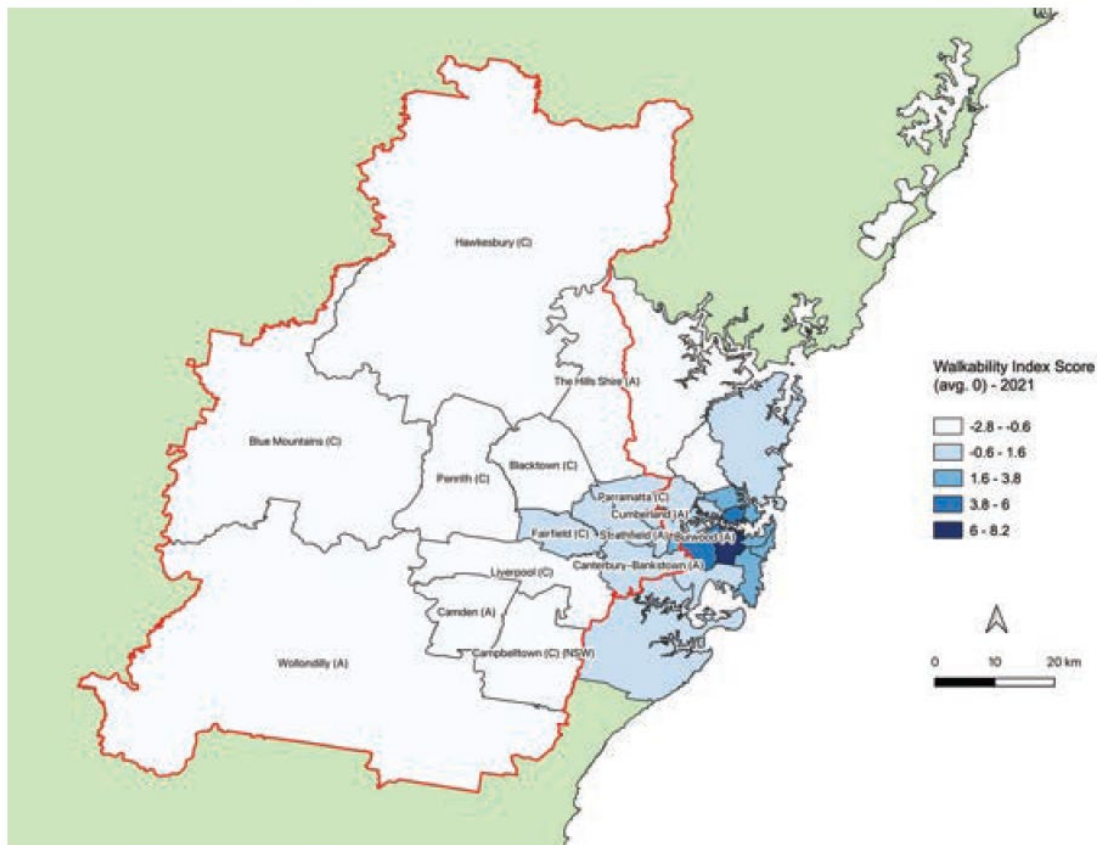
<sup>35</sup> Dodson, J and Sipe N, 2006, Shocking the Suburbs: Urban Location, Housing Debt and Oil Vulnerability in the Australian City, Urban Research Program Paper number 8, Griffith University.

<sup>36</sup> Infrastructure Australia (2019) An assessment of Australia’s future infrastructure needs: the Australian infrastructure audit 2019

<sup>37</sup> [https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/content/dam/digital/images/centre-for-western-sydney/Liveability\\_report\\_WestInvest\\_FINAL\\_090523.pdf](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/content/dam/digital/images/centre-for-western-sydney/Liveability_report_WestInvest_FINAL_090523.pdf)



Figure 5.2: LGA Walkability Index – Overall score<sup>1</sup>, GSR, 2021.



Source: Duffy-Jones, R. (2022). Walkability Index 2021, AUO, ASCS Edition 3, using QGIS [GIS software], version 3.16, Sydney, WSU.  
<sup>1</sup>Average is 0 – negative results indicate low/poor walkability and a positive result indicates high/good walkability.

Figure 4b –Walkability Index scores overall for Greater Sydney Region

There are pockets of high levels of social-economic disadvantage within Western Sydney, with Blacktown (987), Campbelltown (948), Canterbury/Bankstown (917), Cumberland (904), Fairfield (814), Liverpool (931), and Penrith (991) LGAs having SEIFA scores (index of relative socio-economic disadvantage) lower than NSW (1042)<sup>38</sup>.

The SEIFA Index of disadvantage for Western Sydney in 2021 was 967<sup>39</sup>.

Inaction regarding public transport servicing in the growth areas will lead to:

- Increased dependency on cars
- Misalignment of the sequencing of major infrastructure to address community need.
- Reduced walkability and access to amenities and public spaces.
- Decrease in social connection and less place-based interaction.
- Decrease in good health, social and environmental outcomes for the Western Parkland City.

<sup>38</sup> <https://profile.id.com.au/cws/seifa-disadvantage>

<sup>39</sup> ibid

***(e) affordability compared with other areas of Greater Sydney and New South Wales and relative to means***

Public transport affordability can vary within Western Sydney due to the diversity of neighbourhoods and income levels. Lower-income individuals and families find it more challenging to afford regular public transport fares, especially when fares are not proportionate to income. Cost and distance to train stations are also significant barriers to accessing public transport.

The Productivity Commission identified in their 2021 Public Transport Pricing Research paper<sup>40</sup> that concessions are inadequately targeted. People experiencing disadvantage cannot access concessional fares, while some high-income customers are eligible for generous discounts.

Concessions and discounted fares would be useful if there was equitable access to public transport.

The Transport Affordability Index implemented by the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) revealed the average household will spend fourteen thousand dollars a year on transport in Hobart, but up to twenty-two thousand dollars a year if they live in Western Sydney<sup>41</sup>. The AAA commissioned this work so both consumers and policy makers can have a clear picture of exactly how much transport really costs, and how policy decisions at state and federal levels will affect household budgets over time<sup>42</sup>. The December 2022 findings show the typical household spent 15.1 per cent of its income on transport costs<sup>43</sup>. With the return of the full rate of fuel excise, fuel expenditure increased over the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter for the typical Australian household (\$98.31 per week) which paid \$12.96 per week more than the same time the previous (\$85.35 per week Q4 2021) in fuel expenditure. The AAA data showed Sydney was still Australia's most expensive capital city with typical weekly transport costs averaging \$492.52, followed by Melbourne (\$468.67) and Brisbane (\$466.13). This shows that transport costs are placing a significant strain on household budgets.

Only three Australian capital cities – Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane – use toll roads. Costs increased by \$77 per year in Sydney and \$31 per year in Melbourne due to a scheduled quarterly price adjustment<sup>44</sup>. Toll road costs were unchanged in Brisbane. The typical Sydney household continued to incur the greatest costs for toll roads, while Brisbane became the sole cheapest capital city.

Driving into central Sydney from the west costs almost twice as much as commuting from east and south of the city. Many in Western Sydney are forced to commute by car because of insufficient public transport options. A daily commute from Bankstown to Barangaroo in Sydney's CBD can cost almost \$60 a day<sup>45</sup>. The recent announcement of the toll relief scheme is welcomed however the rebate of up to \$750 to motorists who spend more than \$375 a year is minimal when some are paying up to \$290 a week<sup>46</sup>. A comparison of commutes of similar distance for people living east and south of the city shows toll costs are almost half those faced by people living in the west. Commuters from the north face tolls that are almost a third of the cost<sup>47</sup>. This is inequitable for our residents

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/public-transport/public-transport.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.aant.com.au/news/true-cost-transport>

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*

<sup>43</sup> [https://www.aaa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/230212\\_AAA\\_Affordability-Index-Q4-2022.pdf](https://www.aaa.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/230212_AAA_Affordability-Index-Q4-2022.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jan/24/tolls-discriminate-western-sydney-residents-face-60-a-day-levy-to-drive-into-cbd>

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*

<sup>47</sup> <https://maps.transport.nsw.gov.au/egeomaps/sydney-motorways-toll-calculator/>

who are vehicle dependant and experiencing “forced car ownership” due to a lack of alternative public transport options.

Eligibility for concession fares remains a major barrier to people experiencing poverty and disadvantage from accessing the public transport network<sup>4849</sup>

Implementing the recent recommendations of the IPART Opal Fares 2020-2024 Ensuring Affordability Report by providing discounted fares to NSW residents that hold a current Commonwealth Health Care Card (Health Care Card), trialling discounted programs auspiced by community service organisations and charities and considering free travel passengers with a permanent physical disability would be steps to address inequities of our Western Sydney residents.

There are current inequities in Transport for NSW current “On-Demand Services” for Western Sydney in comparison to other areas of Greater Sydney and New South Wales. This program has a greater focus on inner city suburbs that currently have better access to public transport options.

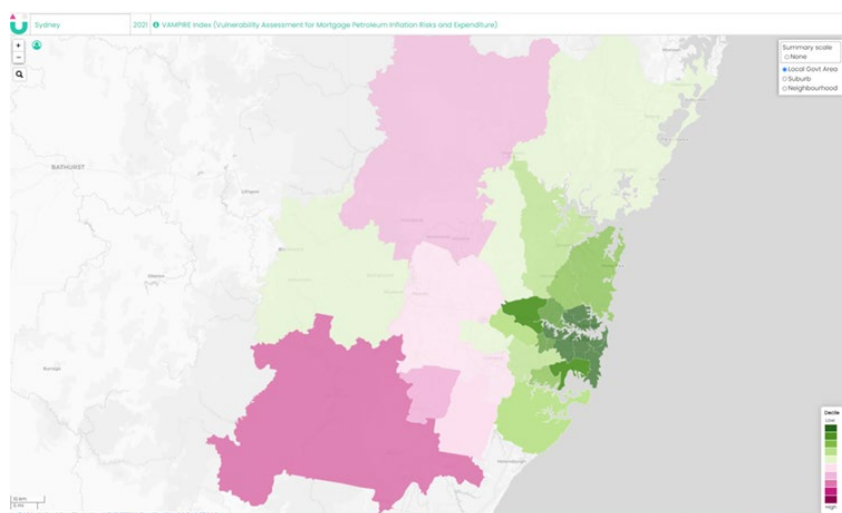
The “On-Demand Services” program should be expanded and offered more broadly to Western Sydney residents. It is noted the only service currently available in Western Sydney is a trial service in Edmondson Park<sup>50</sup>

Plans and policies to improve housing affordability must also be made in coordination with transportation and public transport service provision.

Households in outer western Sydney suburbs are disproportionately affected by rapid interest rate rises, fuel prices and the cost-of-living crisis.

Growth areas on the western fringe of Sydney are more vulnerable to spikes in the cost of living, due to greater exposure to mortgage stress, car dependency and other inflationary pressure, as evidenced by the Australian Urban Observatory's VAMPIRE index (Vulnerability for Mortgage Petroleum Inflation Risks and Expenditure) - see Figure 5.

The VAMPIRE Index assesses the vulnerability of households using a range of indicators, including income, the number of mortgaged homes and car dependency, and is based on 2021 census data.



*Figure 5. VAMPIRE Index (Vulnerability for Mortgage Petroleum Inflation Risks and Expenditure) 2021*

<sup>48</sup> NSW Council of Social Services of NSW submission to IPART Issues Paper (NCOSS Submission), p 8.

<sup>49</sup> [https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/information-paper-final-report-opal-fares-2020-2024-ensuring-affordability-february-2020\\_0.pdf](https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/information-paper-final-report-opal-fares-2020-2024-ensuring-affordability-february-2020_0.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> <https://transportnsw.info/travel-info/ways-to-get-around/on-demand>

The shift towards working from home is not an option for many people living in Western Sydney, as their jobs are more likely to be service-oriented (healthcare, education, retail), construction, manufacturing, transport and warehousing roles that need to be done on-site.

The current inflationary environment is having a disproportionate effect on Western Sydney households that can't work from home and are very car dependent.

New public transport infrastructure such as Metro lines is needed in Western Sydney to bridge the vulnerability gap, but in the short-term, improved bus services (new and more frequent services) in outer suburbs may ease car dependency.

Research by Stanley, et al. 2022 has shown that local bus services would only need to carry eight or nine passengers an hour for societal benefits to outweigh the financial cost of running the bus<sup>51</sup>.

Improving public transport access in Western Sydney can have a societal benefit through better health and wellbeing, increased employment and reduced crime, and these financial benefits should be included in cost-benefit-analysis of transport infrastructure projects.

***(f) role of public transport and future transport technologies to reduce car dependency in Western Sydney, including barriers to improving public transport services***

Without transport, people can't access jobs, community services, medical facilities, schools, universities, friends and relatives, places of worship, shops, parks, and all manner of other things that are vital for citizenship and quality of life. Residents in Western Sydney are locked into car dependency due to poor integrated public transport services.

Alternate public transport models such as light rail, connecting active transport initiatives through "last mile" solutions can better meet the travel needs of people in Western Sydney.

Integrated public transport systems, combined with solutions such as e-bike sharing, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and ridesharing services, supported by digital technology can help address the "last mile" challenge, making it easier for people to reach their destinations. These measures can help alleviate traffic congestion, reduce environmental impacts, enhance urban liveability, and improve overall mobility.

Western Sydney residents may be resistant to shifting from private cars to public transport due to convenience, perceived comfort, and established habits if alternative public transport options are not reliable, efficient, and effective.

The implementation of smart technologies like real-time tracking, digital payment systems, and data analytics can also enhance the public transport user experience.

It is critical there is collaboration in the coordination and collection of common data sets for innovative models to succeed. Common data sets can provide real-time information on transit routes, schedules, and vehicle locations. Sharing data sets enable better planning, real-time management, improved passenger experiences, and more sustainable and accessible transportation options for communities. They also support the development of innovative solutions and technologies to enhance public transport services.

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<sup>51</sup> Stanley, et al. 2022. Place-based disadvantage, social exclusion and the value of mobility. Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice, 160: 101-113.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0965856422000933?via%3Dihub#>

Standardising and sharing datasets can lead to greater transparency, accessibility, and innovation within the public transport sector.

Collaboration and data-sharing agreements between stakeholders is essential to create comprehensive and accurate data sets that benefit both public transport agencies and passengers. Additionally, data privacy and security considerations should be considered when collecting and sharing public transport-related data.

Without strong political will and support from various stakeholders, (including government bodies, urban planners, transport agencies, and the public) public transport improvements will be limited in our growing region.

Collaborative land use planning across all levels of government is critical to ensure zoning and land-use policies are aligned with public transport development plans to create compact, transit-oriented communities.

Addressing these barriers requires a combination of policy initiatives, public engagement, strategic planning, technological innovation, and dedicated investment. Collaborative efforts among government authorities, transportation agencies, urban planners, Local Government, and the private sector are essential to successfully improve public transport services and reduce car dependency in Western Sydney.

***(g) 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***

Building a just and inclusive society requires collaborative and inclusive solutions to collective challenges. When harnessed, the power of intentional cooperation is immense. The pursuit of a just and civil society often involves collaboration and cooperation among a variety of stakeholders.

Local government has a critical role in urban planning, urban design and the regulation space. Local government agencies are responsible for urban planning and zoning, which can influence transit-oriented development (TOD). Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) that design communities around public transport hubs, promoting mixed-use developments, and increase population density near these hubs is essential to addressing inequities in Western Sydney.

Public transport infrastructure investments that include the construction or expansion of transit lines, stations, bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors, light rail systems, or other transportation-related projects will improve accessibility, reduce congestion, and enhance mobility across Western Sydney.

The provision of public transport involves a collaborative effort between the public and private sectors, including local government, and will require innovative funding models to ensure sustainable and efficient systems.

Public-private partnerships (“PPPs”) between the public and private sectors can be an effective way to build and implement new infrastructure or to renovate, operate, maintain or manage existing transport infrastructure facilities. This collaboration allows for the sharing of risks and resources between the public and private sectors.

The use of public-private partnerships in the provision of public transport services has both positive and negative impacts, however there is a responsibility for all societal stakeholders to create and contribute to a just and civil society — this is not a role just for those with a specific civil or public remit<sup>52</sup>. There is a need for significant collaboration and coordination across our three tiers of

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<sup>52</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/02/public-private-cooperation-can-address-systemic-inequalities-and-ensure-a-more-just-and-inclusive-society-heres-how/>



government as well as private investment. Corporations are an integral part of the large economy of any given society.

Western Sydney is the fastest growing population centre in New South Wales – it's also the third largest economy in Australia behind the Sydney CBD and Melbourne. Western Sydney contributes more than \$100 billion to the economy every year<sup>53</sup>. There is a role for government in promoting Corporate Social Responsibility<sup>54</sup> to help address the current transport inequities in Western Sydney.

In any public-private partnership checks and balances are essential to have in place to ensure there is accountability and quality service provision. A shared interest in obtaining a high-quality service delivery by all stakeholders is a critical success factor in these partnerships. This can be addressed through contract governance and contractual measures such as financial sustainability, reputation as a supplier of high-quality services, along with regulatory/enforcement systems, guidelines, and standards of accountability and equity. Public-private partnerships will also require strong and consistent leadership from government and a unit cost system could create incentives to reach and service the most vulnerable populations in Western Sydney.

Without careful planning and joint investment, there is a risk both soft and hard infrastructure provision will be slow, costly, misaligned, or inefficient impacting upon the health and wellbeing outcomes for Western Sydney.

Local government can implement public-private partnerships<sup>55</sup> and policies that encourage the development of pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, cycling lanes, and other last-mile solutions around transport hubs.

Value capture mechanisms can be included in public-private partnerships and can be effective tools for financing public transport infrastructure. Mechanisms and strategies used to capture a portion of the increased property values and economic benefits that often result from investments in public transportation infrastructure, help generate revenue that can be reinvested in the development, operation, and maintenance of public transport systems. However, they require careful planning, coordination between public and private entities, and consideration of regulations and property markets to be successful.

These approaches can help fund infrastructure, support economic development, and create more accessible and efficient transit systems, ultimately benefiting both residents and businesses in Western Sydney.

Other innovative funding models, such as pitchfests can also assist in the development of technological innovations. Pitchfests can enable participants to receive one-on-one mentorship, attend group sessions, and connect with the investment community and they can lead to innovative funding and subsidy programmes in partnership with private operators. This model can motivate and encourage innovative solutions such as digital payment systems, real-time tracking apps, and data analytics to enhance the user experience in relation to public transport options in Western Sydney.

The development of collaborative Communities of Practice in the setting of policies and regulations that guide public transport development, safety standards, fare structures, and service quality can also enhance public transport service provision in Western Sydney.

Communities of practice encourage the sharing of knowledge, joint planning, designing, and building of public transport infrastructure opportunities. Collaborative communities of practice can play a

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<sup>53</sup> <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/workplace/100-billion-reasons-to-celebrate-western-sydney-20230326-p5cvfi#:~:text=Greater%20Western%20Sydney%20has%20long,behind%20Sydney's%20CBD%20and%20Melbourne.>

<sup>54</sup> Wirba, A.V. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): The Role of Government in promoting CSR. J Knowl Econ (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-023-01185-0>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ppp.pdf>

valuable role in encouraging and supporting public infrastructure projects. They serve as knowledge hubs, foster collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange among stakeholders involved in public infrastructure projects. By bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives, communities of practice can contribute to the success, efficiency, and sustainability of infrastructure initiatives which is critical to the future success of Western Sydney.

***(h) staffing and future workforce planning, taking into account predicted service demand based on predicted population growth in Western Sydney***

As Western Sydney grows and evolves so will the need for an agile public transport network to serve new suburbs and areas. Urban planners and designers will play a key role in integrating transport infrastructure with urban development.

Western Sydney's significant population growth, has presented challenges in providing adequate infrastructure, including public transportation and public services. There are currently ongoing challenges regarding workforce movements, capability, and capacity<sup>56</sup>.

There is a need for skilled professionals to plan, develop, manage, and operate various aspects of the public transport system. Innovative funding will be required to encourage the use of scholarships and internships across all levels of government and assist with developing the workforce required.

Accurate forecasting of service demand based on population growth projections is critical to inform workforce planning and ensuring staffing levels meet future needs. The collaborative collection and analysis of common data sets is critical to addressing the need because of the impending growth in Western Sydney.

New technologies are also driving demand for new and expanded skills.

Western Sydney is one of the most multicultural and diverse communities in Australia therefore a diverse workforce that reflects the community being served will enhance the quality of service and ensure a broad range of perspectives.

I thank you for your consideration of this submission and welcome any further opportunity to work collaboratively with the NSW Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No.6. Please connect with me at \_\_\_\_\_ or on \_\_\_\_\_ if anything in this submission requires further clarification

Sincerely

Ally Dench

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<sup>56</sup> <https://ara.net.au/wp-content/uploads/ARA-Skills-Capability-Study.pdf>