

**Submission  
No 61**

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

**Organisation:** Campbelltown Health and Education Precinct

**Date Received:** 21 September 2023

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## Submission to the inquiry on the current and future transport needs in Western Sydney

### About CHEP

Located in the heart of Campbelltown city centre, the Campbelltown Health and Education Precinct (CHEP) contributes significantly to the economic activity in the area and provides critical services to the Macarthur area and wider region.

It is home to public and private health facilities, research centres, state-of-the-art education institutions hosting more than 15,000 students, a major retail centre and a range of commercial and accommodation uses which drive innovation, synergies, networking, and business development opportunities.

Those servicing and serviced by the precinct include students, educators and workers supporting delivery of education services, researchers, medical and health care workers, patients and their carers, retail and service workers as well as residents. Some of these people are relatively local, from within the Campbelltown LGA and the Macarthur and others from further afield; from the Illawarra, Southern Highlands and other locations across greater Sydney.

In 2020 the CHEP Collaboration was formed, comprising of partners of organisations who have assets or a vested interest in the growth of this precinct, to help establish and deliver on its health, education and economic objectives. Partners of the CHEP Collaboration:

- Campbelltown City Council
- Western Sydney University
- Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research
- TAFE NSW
- South West Sydney Primary Health Network
- Campbelltown Public Hospital
- South Western Sydney Local Health District
- UNSW
- Landcom

and independently chaired by the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue

The strategic objectives of CHEP include improved health and wellbeing outcomes, improved access to jobs for residents through education and training opportunities, and increased public and private sector investment into the CHEP to support health and education objectives.

**It should be noted that this submission was created by the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue, which convenes the CHEP Collaboration, with the assistance of CHEP partners. This submission, however, has not been endorsed by each individual partner organisation, and the information shared in the submission does not necessarily reflect the views of every organisation.**

## Response to the 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.**

Poor connectivity between different modes of public transport, unreliable services that don't run frequently enough, and first/last mile connectivity are all significant barriers to CHEP workers, students, and service users accessing and consistently using public transport. This is an issue seen throughout Campbelltown, the Macarthur area, and Greater Western Sydney's (GWS) outer suburbs. As a result, the region suffers from high levels of car dependency, congestion, and low levels of public transport use in comparison to other, better-connected areas of Sydney (see appendix 1 & 2) and central GWS.

CHEP workers, students, and service users often cite trip length and the inconvenience of waiting for connections as a barrier to using public transport. Poor coordination between bus and rail services exacerbates both these issues, as well as adds to difficulties around last mile connectivity from homes to transport.

The low density spread of the area naturally means that both residents and workers often live and work further than walking distance from a train station or direct bus line to a travel hub.

One example of the first/last mile connectivity issues being faced in the region can be seen in Campbelltown LGA, where 35% of the population currently live further than 400m from a regular 30-min weekday public transport service.<sup>1</sup> This has resulted in many residents not being able access their closest railway station within 30 minutes via public transport, despite there being seven electrified rail stations within the LGA.

Many suburban bus services are meandering and inconsistent, meaning that those who wish to use heavy rail or a direct bus line are forced to drive and park at a station. The time this adds to a commute often leaves residents deciding to simply drive all the way to their destination.

CHEP's workers and students are similarly affected by these first/ last mile connectivity issues. For example, to access Campbelltown Hospital during the day, options for workers, students, and service users to access the site by train involve either a 32-36 minute walk or an ambling 15-20 minute bus trip between Campbelltown train station and the hospital site.

Shift work is highly prevalent among health staff and practicing students. Those working and learning at CHEP often find that the unreliability and lack of bus services during off-peak hours are a serious barrier to using public transport while engaging in shift work. Essential workers doing shift work cannot get trains after midnight and before 4AM. The infrequency of off-peak bus services means that the ability of workers and non-drivers using buses to get home safely after shifts is significantly impacted. When surveyed, health staff have indicated that an increase in their public transport options may encourage their use of it.

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<sup>1</sup> RMIT - Australian Urban Observatory

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

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

The Macarthur region, one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. As at the 2021 census the Macarthur region was home to 351,816 people. Over the next 20 years the region is anticipated to grow to between 517,000 and 615,000 residents, with the demand for public transport expected to grow with it.

Without provisions for future public transport networks and assuming a constant rate of employment participation it is estimated the number of residents within the Macarthur region using a vehicle to get to work will increase by 77,000 persons. Our road network is insufficient to support that level of traffic generation. Therefore, public transport services require significant enhancement.

For years, the residents and workers in the outer South West have been grappling with worsening traffic conditions as congestion increases along with the rapid growth in population in these areas. A lack of efficient and accessible public transport alternatives has resulted in an entrenched over reliance on personal vehicles for residents, putting increased pressure on household budgets through tolls, fuel expenses, parking fees, and vehicle maintenance costs.

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

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

Car dependency is a significant health, social, and economic issue, especially for the workers and residents of the Macarthur region where options for public transport are more limited than in other parts of the region. It has implications for the inclusion and socioeconomic wellbeing of residents, the prevalence of chronic diseases, and the region's economic productivity and growth.

### Health

Car dependency layers onto other factors like socioeconomic determinants of health and food deserts combine to create an obesogenic environment that residents must battle against to engage in a healthy lifestyle. The region's ongoing issue with rates of overweight, obesity, and chronic preventable health conditions like type 2 diabetes clearly highlights the ongoing effect of this situation on those who live and work in the area.

Increasing the use of public transport by students, workers, and residents will be a step in the right direction for improving this. The use of public transport usually involves some walking to and from transit stops such as train stations or bus stops. Good access to public transport is associated with walking sufficiently each week to meet physical activity guidelines. Public transport use can add eight to 33 minutes of physical activity per day.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 2012, Rissel, et al., Key health benefits associated with public transport: a rapid review

We know from conservative research analyses that improving accessibility to public transport will improve population health by facilitating physical activity and lead to healthcare cost savings compared with business-as-usual.<sup>3</sup>

## Social

Public transport is also not just about people in seats, it's about which people can get in the seats. This influences a person's inclusion into communities and society. The Macarthur's lack of public transport connectivity often leaves its residents car dependent. This has a doubling effect on the CHEP workers, students, and surrounding residents as high rates of on-site service-oriented workers means that those working and learning at CHEP facilities are less likely to be able to do so from home.

As seen in figure 1 (right), households in the Macarthur are disproportionately vulnerable to spikes in cost of living, such as rapid interest rate rises, fuel prices and groceries, in comparison to suburbs in the north and east of Sydney.<sup>4</sup>

Financial pressures are exacerbated when ready use of public transport, the more affordable than driving, isn't an option. This works to exclude residents from accessing goods, services, jobs, and social options, especially for those that are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Social exclusion creates costs for both the excluded person and the wider community. Those who are socially excluded commonly having a higher risk of being unemployed, poorer mental and physical health, being less socially connected and some are more likely to engage in crime and/or substance abuse.<sup>5</sup>

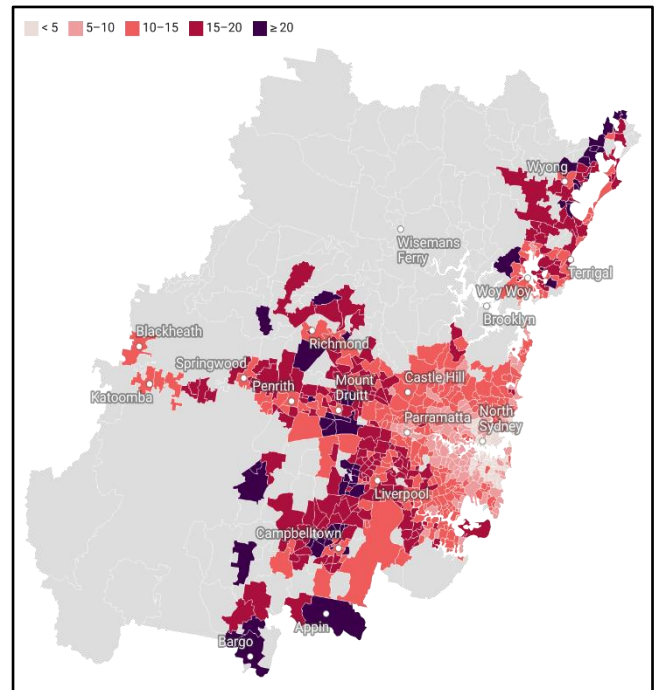
## Economic

Continued vehicle dependence in the region will:

- Have impacts on economic productivity and service supply due to increasing congestion
- Cause as deterioration in the amenity and destination appeal, resulting in challenges the attraction of skilled workers

The lack of public transport connectivity in the region continues to drive demand for car ownership, and therefore car dependency, increasing congestion, impacting the performance of our road network, in a self-perpetuating cycle. This unhealthy cycle requires a circuit-breaker commitment from government to enhance the public transport services and improve the infrastructure, to make public transport attractive to our residents.

Figure 1 - 2021 Vulnerability Assessment for Mortgage Petroleum Inflation Risks and Expenditure (VAMPIRE) index by the Australian Urban Observatory.



VAMPIRE indicates household vulnerability to rising costs and includes 4 major variables using counts: proportion of dwellings with 2 or more cars; average household weekly income; proportion of dwellings with a mortgage; and proportion of residents commuting by car.

<sup>3</sup> 2019, Brown, et al., Better transport accessibility, better health: a health economic impact assessment study for Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>4</sup> As seen in the Australian Urban Observatory's VAMPIRE index

<sup>5</sup> 2005, Baumeister, et al., Social Exclusion Impairs Self-Regulation

The current levels of congestion in Campbelltown and the Macarthur area are expected to continue to increase if there is no intervention, this is going to negatively impact the region's economic potential. A region's economy does best when its residents spend more time working, using services and recreating, and less time travelling to those places.<sup>6</sup> Long, congested driven commutes have a significant impact on worker productivity, working conditions, and business shipping costs, all which increases with the length of the trip.<sup>7</sup>

Congestion and commute times and ease are considerable factors for livability. The relative livability of an area impacts on its ability to attract skilled workers, and subsequently improve the knowledge-based industries within the region.<sup>8</sup> Attracting and retaining skilled workers is an integral part of building CHEP into a substantive health, knowledge, and innovation leader. The impact of limited connectivity and building congestion, however, will impact on the CHEP Collective's ability to draw talent.

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

Improving the first and last mile connections to transport hubs will have a considerable impact on the appeal of public transport around CHEP. Public transport becomes a more practical choice when the gap between home or work and transit stations is seamlessly bridged through the provision of reliable and convenient options such as bike-sharing, pedestrian pathways, or shuttle services.

Improvements to access via active transport or other non-private vehicle modes of transport effectively expand the catchment area of transit services, by making them more attractive and convenient for individuals residing farther from transportation nodes.

A critical component of improving the first/last mile and promoting public transport choices in GWS will be the extent to which key amenities and services can be integrated with station developments. For example, providing more station adjacent childcare centres or grocery stores can significantly uncomplicate the multiple necessary daily errands that make car travel the more attractive mode choice for so many CHEP workers, students, and service users.

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<sup>6</sup> 2015, A., Somuyiwa, S., Fadare & B., Ayantoyunbo, Analysis of the Cost of Traffic Congestion on Worker's Productivity in a Mega City of a Developing Economy

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> 2006, COAG Urban Congestion Review

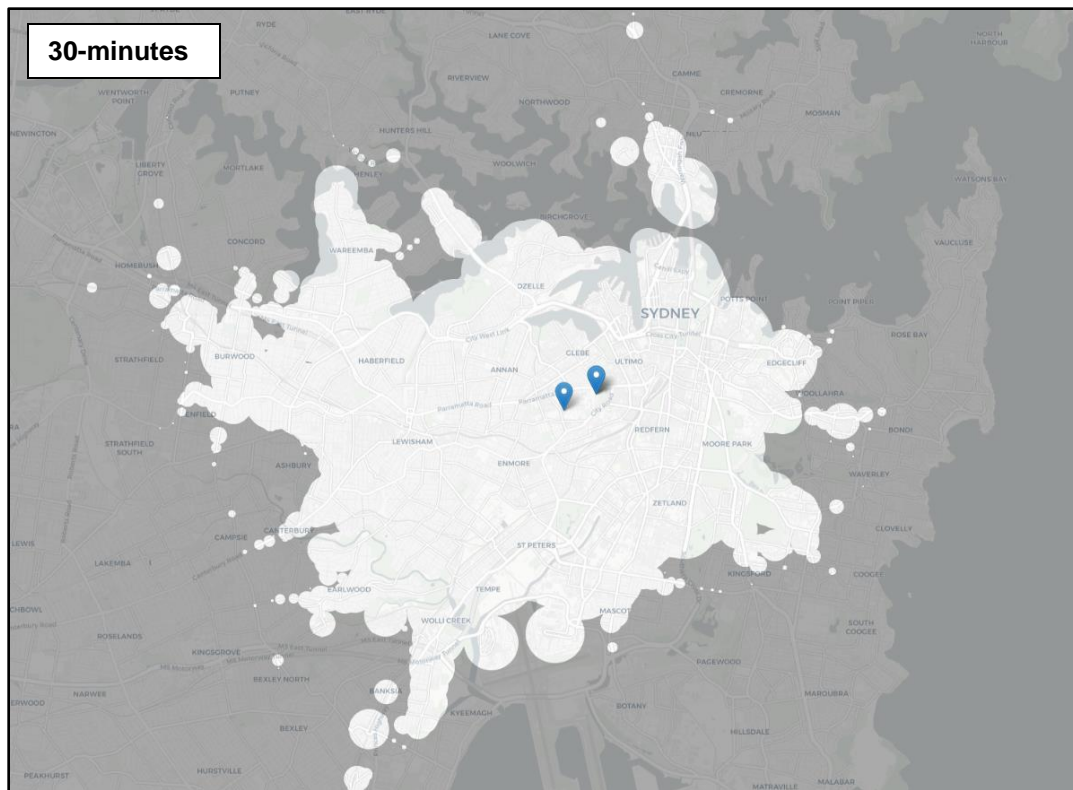
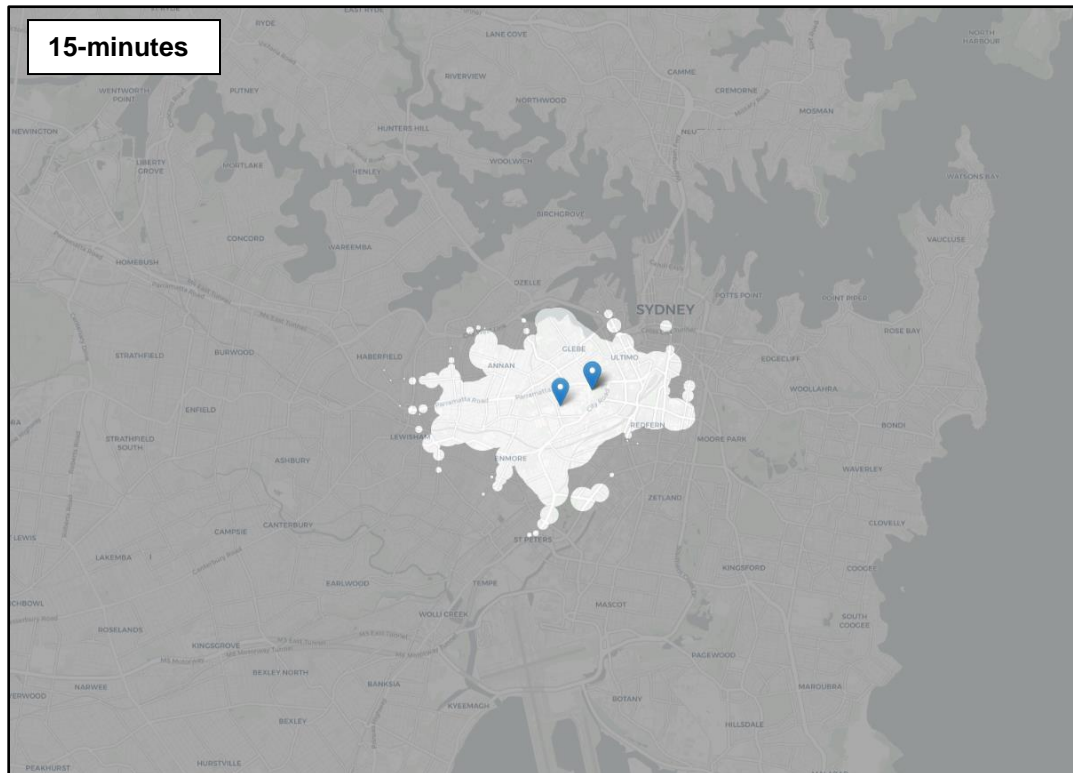
## Appendix 1 - Public transport connectivity from Western Sydney University Campbelltown Campus and Campbelltown Hospital – 15mins & 30mins<sup>9</sup>



<sup>9</sup> Source: [Mapnificent](#)



**Appendix 2 - Public transport connectivity from the University of Sydney Camperdown Campus and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital – 15mins & 30mins<sup>10</sup>**



<sup>10</sup> Source: [Mapnificient](#)