

Submission
No 165

INQUIRY INTO DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSPORT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Organisation: Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue

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Inquiry into the Development of the Transport Oriented Development Program

Submission by the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue

March 2024

About the Dialogue

The Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue (the Dialogue) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the NSW Legislative Council's inquiry into the *Development of the Transport Oriented Development Program*. The Dialogue is fiercely committed to enhancing the future of the Greater Western Sydney (GWS) region and has cultivated an extensive network of Partners from within the community, private, and public sectors who share this goal. The GWS region is home to over half of Greater Sydney's population and functions as the third largest economy in Australia, and the infrastructure, or often the lack thereof, that makes up the region has direct implications for these Partners.

Since its inception, The Dialogue has been advocating for sensible, equitable, and transformative infrastructure for the residents of GWS. The Dialogue has always been a vocal proponent of projects that will provide residents with better opportunities, services, and amenities, and enhance their lives, such as establishing recreational water spaces, developing health and education hubs, and increasing community and social housing. To realise the full potential of these projects, a comprehensive, integrated, and thoughtful public transportation network is crucial. Currently the GWS region is inordinately underserved by the transport infrastructure in place for residents, workers, and visitors, especially when compared to counterparts in the east.

The Dialogue has previously supported a number of key transport and urban planning projects that have the potential to deliver unparalleled benefits for the region through improved connectivity, job-generation and increased access to essential services.

Recommendations

1. The Dialogue is supportive of spreading the population growth and housing development burden across the Sydney Metropolitan area
2. The NSW Government should work in good faith with Councils and communities to:
 - a. Address and alleviate concerns around impacts of increased housing density
 - b. Utilise Transport Oriented Developments (TODs) in GWS to uplift the local area's social infrastructure and essential services, ensuring that new population growth is met with investment in new service capacity
3. The TODs program should ensure the delivery of jobs, services, and infrastructure that will support new population growth.

Recommendation 1

The Dialogue is supportive of spreading the population growth development burden across the Sydney Metropolitan area

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge the NSW Government's efforts to share the load of increasing housing and population density across the Sydney Metropolitan area, particularly in well-connected and high amenity suburbs in the north and east.

GWS has too frequently been considered the 'dormitory' of Greater Sydney, shouldering population growth without the required transport or social amenity to match. As such, the Dialogue supports the move towards re-distributing some of these pressures.

Increasing density in suburbs closer to the CBD also makes good fiscal sense. Modelling by the NSW Productivity Commission¹ has found that infill development in Sydney's inner-ring suburbs costs substantially less than those further west. Where residential development may cost \$40,000 per dwelling in the Eastern Suburbs, Inner South and West, and the Lower North Shore, many areas in the west will cost at least an additional \$40,000 per new dwelling. This is due to several factors, including the cost of adding utilities, the requirement for ensuring adequate school places per child, and costs related to road congestion and public transport overcrowding.

Recommendation 2

The Dialogue encourages the NSW Government to work in good faith with Councils and communities to:

A. Address and alleviate concerns around impacts of increased housing density

Whilst the Dialogue acknowledges that the current State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPP) need to be expedited in response to the deepening housing crisis, the current gaps in social and transportation services in the West are major concerns that cannot go unaddressed.

There are genuine concerns held by community members and local government about deteriorating traffic conditions, loss of local character, shrinking open and green spaces, and the capacity of schools and community facilities to accommodate the surging population growth.

The Dialogue encourages the NSW Government to work in good faith with GWS Councils and communities within the TOD SEPP areas to identify and work to alleviate concerns held around the disruptive impacts that may accompany the development of the TOD precincts.

B. Utilise TODs in GWS to uplift the local area's social infrastructure and essential services, ensuring that new population growth is met with investment in new service capacity

Beyond addressing the legitimate concerns of community, the Dialogue also recommends that a concerted effort is made to ensure that GWS located TODs programs are used to fill gaps and uplift existing social infrastructure and services.

Local services and amenity need to be integrated into new TODs in recognition that throughout most of GWS, essential services are not meeting the demands of existing communities. As such, new services and amenity should not automatically be considered as a net positive.

¹ NSW Productivity Commission, 2023, *Building more homes where infrastructure makes sense*.

GWS's strong population growth in recent years has exacerbated the strain on existing social and transport infrastructure in the west. The disparity of access to amenity and services in Sydney's inner suburbs compared to the West is a well-documented phenomenon. A failure to support high growth communities will result in the exacerbation of these issues and significant community pushback.

One of several examples to this recommendation is school infrastructure: a topic of considerable community interest. Older, well-established areas, especially in the CBD's inner ring tend to have more schools which are also not operating to, or over capacity.² Recent rapid development in low-density areas such as the North West has seen high enrolment rates in formerly low-density areas, resulting in over-capacity schools requiring upgrades to increase capacity.³

Through the community and local government an assessment of the availability and accessibility of community transport and social infrastructure needs to be conducted. The results of this assessment should go on to influence service provision decisions related to the TODs program, as well as other urban planning initiatives for the local area.

Recommendation 3

Ensure the delivery of jobs, services, and infrastructure that will support new population growth

The GWS region is expected to experience a period of strong population growth over the coming decades. The current population is currently greater than 2.5m and is expected to increase by 32% between now and 2041.⁴ This growth must be carefully managed to ensure that the structural inequity in Sydney's economic geography is not further entrenched.

We note that the current jobs deficit in the GWS region sits at approximately 300,000 less than required to match the needs of the current population⁵.

² NSW Productivity Commission, 2023, *Building more homes where infrastructure makes sense*.

³ NSW Productivity Commission, 2023, *Building more homes where infrastructure makes sense*.

⁴NSW Department of Planning, 2023, *Common Planning Assumptions: population projections to 2041*

⁵Centre for Western Sydney, 2024, *Unlimited Potential: Western Sydney's Economic Plan*