

Linking Sydney and its regions

Australia has a highly urbanised population with the majority of people living in large cities. The great challenge for managing growth is to create adequate access to these cities via suitable transport corridors.

The Bells Line Expressway will provide a vital connection between Sydney and the important Western region of NSW.



How is Sydney growing?

Sydney accounts for almost two-thirds of NSW's population and will contribute three-quarters of NSW's population growth to 2036 (NSW Department of Planning, 2008).

Sydney's population is expected to grow to almost 6 million people by 2036, an increase of 1.7 million or 40 percent. Nearly 70 percent of Sydney's population growth will be driven by natural increase, with migration accounting for just over 30 percent of the population increase.

The 2010 Sydney Metropolitan Plan outlines strategies to house 70 percent of the increased population in existing urban areas. Additionally, Infrastructure Partnerships Australia forecasts that, during the next 25 years, demand for passenger transport will double and by 2050 national freight will triple.

Increased population, higher urban densities and growing passenger and freight levels will add to the already soaring levels of congestion in Sydney.

Congestion is "the bane of urban dwellers" (Infrastructure Australia, 2010). The State of Australian Cities Report 2010 indicates that congestion reduces productivity, lengthens working hours and shifts the work/family balance for many Australians.

The estimated cost of this congestion is approximately \$5 billion a year (Infrastructure, Partnerships Australia, 2010).

The NSW State Government asks "Should Sydney continue to accommodate the majority of population growth in NSW?"

(NSW Department of Planning, 2010)

Answer: No

Most experts acknowledge that the largest population growth over the next 25 years will occur in Sydney, however other regions throughout NSW should be provided with adequate infrastructure in order to offer an alternative location for population growth.

The Metropolitan Plan for Sydney indicates that improved road and rail connections between Sydney and regional NSW cities "provides significant opportunities to expand the productive capacity of Sydney's economy through lower land costs and access to an expanded workforce amongst other advantages" (NSW Department of Planning, 2010).

What are the alternatives?

Answer: Grow regional centres, building on government initiatives

- A number of government policies are already in place encouraging growth in regional areas including the Evocities campaign and the Regional Development Australia initiative.
- The Central West region of NSW is well aware of the importance of adequate transport links with the Bells Line Expressway identified as a high priority area in the Central West component of the NSW State Plan.
- As outlined above, the Sydney Metropolitan Plan acknowledges the need for Sydney to improve transport connections with regional cities.

How is population growing in the rest of NSW and in particular, the Central West?

Population growth in regional NSW varies considerably. Regions with access to high quality transport links with Sydney have experienced higher growth, whereas more isolated regions have recorded slower growth rates and have predictions of negative growth in the future.

Inland regions, including the Central West, are expecting modest population growth (NSW Department of Planning, 2008), with the Central West expecting an increase of around 6 percent between 2011 and 2031 (WRI, 2008).

Information Sheet 5 in this series, outlines the importance of the Western region to the NSW economy, a region with generally poorer transport links to Sydney, despite being one of the closest.

It has been argued that population growth in the Central West could be increased with improved access to services, cultural and other activities in Sydney (WRI, 2005). Specifically, high quality transport connections could provide the impetus to encourage population movement from Sydney to the Central West. A larger population could also provide a number of benefits to Central West communities including:

- a larger labour force lessening the likelihood of skills shortages;
 - the enabling of economies of scale especially in service provision; and
 - increased human capital in the population, improving productivity.
- (Productivity Commission, 2010)

Encouraging regional growth

- Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Dubbo, Orange, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga have united to form the Evocities campaign and encourage people to live, work and invest in their cities. Each of the seven cities has dedicated resources and funding to the campaign, and has in turn secured Federal Government funding, as well as support from the NSW State Government and corporate sponsors (Evocities, 2010).
- Regional Development Australia (RDA) is an initiative of the Federal Government. This initiative provides a

How will building the Bells Line Expressway help?

Improving access to Sydney from one of the key regions in NSW.

Building the Bells Line Expressway will:

- enable considerable industry growth and job creation for the Central West region through improved transport links and economic integration (WRI, 2005);
- provide an alternate location for the increasing population in NSW;
- allow those migrating to the Central West to retain connections to the Sydney region through improved transport links (WRI, 2005);
- provide access to lower land costs and an increased workforce for Sydney (NSW Department of Planning, 2010);
- provide a high quality transport link that will connect regional communities targeted in the existing Evocities and Regional Development Australia initiatives; and
- provide a platform for the future growth of the region.

platform for the three levels of government to work together to support the growth and development of Australia's regions. The Federal Government funds this strategic project with support in many regions from state and local governments (RDA, 2010).



Bells Line Expressway
PMB 17, Bathurst, NSW 2795
T: (02) 6333 6257
www.bleg.com.au

Western Research Institute
C/- Charles Sturt University
Research Station Drive, Bathurst NSW 2795
T: (02) 6338 4435
E: info@wri.org.au www.wri.org.au



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