

Response to the  
Draft Strategy - Future Transport 2056  
including the Regional Services and  
Infrastructure Plan, October 2017  
December 2017



CENTRAL NSW  
COUNCILS



Centroc's Mission is to be recognised as the lead organisation advocating on agreed regional positions and priorities for Central NSW whilst providing a forum for facilitating regional co-operation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources; effectively nurturing sustainable investment and infrastructure development.

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1 December 2017

Reference jm:jb 121701  
Enquiries: Ms J Bennett: 0428 690 935

The Hon Melinda Pavey  
Minister Freight, Roads and Ports  
Transport for NSW  
18 Lee Street  
Chippendale NSW 2008

Dear Minister,

**Re: Future Transport 2056**

Central NSW Councils (Centroc) represents over 200,000 people covering an area of more than 50, 000 sq kms comprising the Local Government Areas of Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Hilltops, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Upper Lachlan, Weddin, and Central Tablelands Water.

It is about the same size as Tasmania with half the population and a similar GDP. Centroc's vision is to be recognised as vital to the sustainable future of NSW and Australia.

Its mission is to be recognised as the lead organisation advocating on agreed regional positions and priorities for Central NSW whilst providing a forum for facilitating regional cooperation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources.

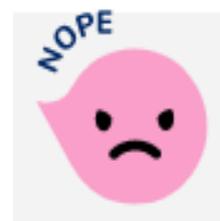
The Centroc Board is made up of the 28 Mayors and General Managers of its member Councils who determine priority for the region. These priorities are then progressed via sponsoring Councils. For more advice on Centroc programming and priorities, please go to our website <http://www.centroc.com.au/>

This response addresses:

1. the overarching Draft Transport 2056 Plan;
2. the Draft Regional NSW Services and Infrastructure Plan; and
3. the Draft Tourism and Transport Plan.

A summary of the response to these plans is as follows.

While the draft Plan is of merit for the majority of the State, the Central West region appears to have been neglected and as a result disadvantaged. Where more detail is provided below, in line with the approach on the barely navigable website, Centroc has an overwhelming "nope" emoji reaction to all three plans. Arguably the consultation process to develop these plans is flawed and metro-centric.



Despite being overlooked in consultations for the development of the draft Plans, this region is critical in sustaining and developing NSW. While the benefits that ease of access to Sydney brings to regional NSW are recognised, its status as a global city relies heavily on the productivity of its regions and what it can leverage in terms of produce, affordable housing, relief from over-crowding and domestic and international tourism opportunities that lie on its doorstep.

It is understood that a Freight and Ports Plan is in development and it is hoped that the concerns that this region has with the three draft Plans will be allayed.

Centroc looks forward to being at the table in the development of the final Plan and in the interim provides the following feedback:

- Linking land use planning to transport planning is welcome;
- Consideration of future technologies is welcome though this should not be at the expense of tackling today's problems;
- While the framing of some of the transport challenge is good, for example separating people and places from transport routes, the solutions are unclear. (e.g. Does this mean every town gets a bypass?)
- The plans are focused on public transport and solutions for Greater Sydney rather than connecting Central NSW people, places and freight to anywhere by any means;
- The Central West region is entitled to an equitable level of access to transport linkages;
- Recognition of Inland Rail, intra-regional journeys and the need for better east west links is welcomed, though opportunities are not being optimised in the draft Plan;
- There is no alignment with this region's aspirations, strategies, Infrastructure Australia's views or the Dept of Planning's Central West and Orana Regional Plan;
- There is a missed opportunity on addressing the link between the western City of Sydney around the Parklands of Penrith, the Badgerys Creek Airport area and Central NSW;
- The Plan does not reflect on past plans or build on them and in fact has "dropped" key programming for this region including the Bells Line corridor preservation; and
- Implementation of the Plans are unclear and there is no TfNSW resource in this region to ensure any of the more interesting commitments like the more detailed work around precinct plans for the larger regional centres or potential town bypasses.

This region consistently advocates for the opportunity to co-design consultations to ensure a fit-for-purpose process in collaborating on solutions with regional communities. There are concerns that the use of emoji to consult is not fit-for-purpose and trivialises meaningful engagement on such significant and complex planning issues.

The overwhelming issue for this region is that there is NO solution identified in any of the plans for a safe swift link for freight or for passengers travelling between Sydney, Central NSW and further west. The image below that shows this region linking to nowhere says it all.



Figure 28: Importance of the Global Gateway Cities

1

In stark relief to this image is the figure on page 92 which depicts what this region is looking for as a solution for freight – a direct link into the Port of Botany.



Figure 60: Freight movements in NSW

2

<sup>1</sup> Future Transport 2056 Draft Regional Services and Infrastructure Plan 17 Oct p 53

The only commentary on the east west connectivity opening up Inland Regional NSW through improved crossings of the range is on page 73 -*“The Blue Mountains will continue to challenge transport access to Greater Sydney from the Central West and Orana due to its expanse and world heritage status. Committed investments by government to the upgrades of the Great Western Highway and Main Western Line will continue to deliver benefits for local communities and the Central West and Orana”*<sup>3</sup>

“What we want is the REAL WestConnex – connecting greater Sydney especially the rapidly growing western Sydney region – to Central NSW”

Firstly the point must be made that the Central West and Orana are very different regions with their own distinct transport issues and priorities.

In reality the travel times between most of this region and Canberra are more competitive than Sydney. This is good for international air transport but does not provide access to ports.

Options for linkages from the Central West to Port Kembla via rail linkages from Demondrille to Blayney and then via the Maldon Dombarton link are worthy of investigation although the Blayney to Demondrille link is not referenced in the draft Plan.

There is no mention of the years of work on a corridor for a future upgrade of the Bells Line. The Bells Line is not mentioned at all, which is very disappointing given the need for, at the very least, ongoing safety upgrades.

Leveraging Inland Rail gets a mention on page 65 where there is reference to connection from Parkes to the east. It is unclear how this will be achieved unless the reference to the duplication of the 2.84k of rail into Port Botany is intended to provide for this connection.<sup>4</sup>

Considerations of flood proofing are not included, for example the Newell and its knock-on effects.

Studies by RDA Central West, has identified a plethora of challenges, particularly for the freight rail task. These include navigating the passenger rail network through Sydney. The duplication of 2.84k, while a pinch point and a very worthy project, will not meet the needs for the freight task for this region where the RDA studies show that this is expected to double in the future. To optimise the opportunities presented by inland rail there is a need to connect inland rail to the three NSW ports with upgraded connections.

For more advice on the freight task please go to the RDA Central website on:

<http://www.rdacentralwest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/RDA-Central-West-Freight-Study-Nov-2014.pdf>

RDA Central West has also begun work on projects to help support the freight task including work on Inland Rail. Their website is worth a browse and their staff are worth contacting.

<http://www.rdacentralwest.org.au>

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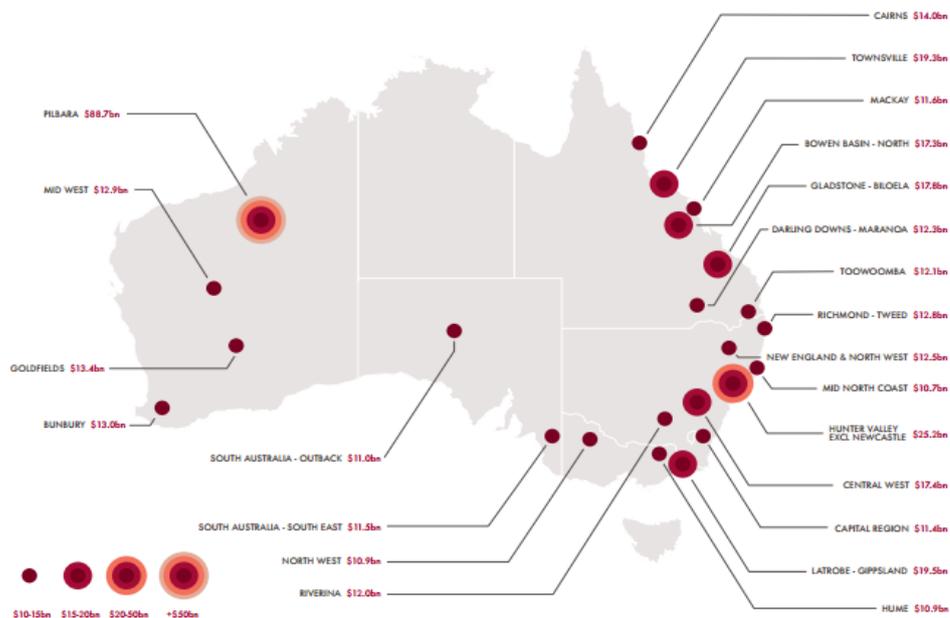
<sup>2</sup> Ibid p 92

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p 73

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects/current-projects/duplication-of-botany-rail-line>

Infrastructure Australia recognises this region as being the 7th largest for Gross Regional Product in 2031 in the nation and yet there is still no solution from the State for efficient freight to port. Transport links, particularly freight into Sydney from our region, are our biggest constraint.

Figure 4.1: Projected gross regional product for major regional centres in 2031



Source: Australian Infrastructure Audit, 2015

Centroc members are staunch supporters of a future safe, swift link between Sydney and Central NSW. Over 13 kilos of publically funded plans costing millions of dollars have been expended to identify one potential solution – a future upgrade generally along the Bells Line alignment. For Sydney as a global city to be connected to the west so that a safe, swift route with lower carbon emissions can be affected, a road solution that is NOT just to persist with upgrades to the Great Western Highway is required.

The Great Western Highway is trying to take on too many roles.

Firstly, it is a local road for the communities of each town along its stretch. Each community has a need to traverse the highway and there are school zones, traffic lights and changes to speed zones ranging from 40kph-80kph to help effect this. These are not highway speeds or conditions.

Secondly, this road is ostensibly the commuter, tourism and freight link between Sydney, Central NSW and further afield.

Thirdly this road is a commuter and tourist route linking the Blue Mountains and Sydney.

A safe swift link between Sydney, Central NSW and then further west provides a good fit with State priorities including:

- Growing the regions
- A Decade of Decentralisation

- Increasing business investment in rural and regional NSW
- Growing NSW GDP
- Increasing tourist bed nights
- Maintaining and investing in infrastructure
- Improving health outcomes for regional communities
- Reducing congestion in Sydney
- Leveraging inland rail

“We want a fit-for-purpose process in collaborating on solutions for the transport constraints of the Central NSW region.”

Arguably, this region has gone backwards and is getting LESS from this round of State transport strategy than in the last round! Where the need for a corridor for a future upgrade of the Bells Line between western Sydney and Central NSW was identified in the NSW Long Term Transport Masterplan 2012, the only commentary regarding traversing the Blue Mountains is continuing with upgrades to the main railway line and GWH.

Building on the strategic work undertaken in 2012 are the following:

- The Bells Line/Outer Sydney Orbital Corridor has been identified by Infrastructure Australia in its July 2017 Corridor Protection report as the highest priority in the nation;
- In July 2015 The Bells Line of Road – Castlereagh Connection, The Outer Sydney Orbital and the South West Rail Link Extension were three of the 19 major transport corridors identified across Sydney for preservation for future transport use; and
- The Bells Line of Road – Castlereagh Connection (BLoR - CC) was recognised as a corridor to provide a connection from Kurrajong to Sydney’s motorway network, and provide an alternate route across the Blue Mountains. Preservation of a corridor for BLoR – CC was a recommendation of the Bells Line of Road Long Term Strategic Corridor Plan.

The Great Western Highway and Bells Line of Road are "High Risk" roads which our residents must traverse to access Sydney for health, education, business and family purposes. Work undertaken during the Bells Line Long Term Strategic Corridor Plan process had the communities of Western Sydney, the Blue Mountains and Central NSW talking to one another on a blog. The conversation was all about road safety and given an aspiration of the Future Transport 2056 Plan is zero trauma, work will need to continue to separate freight by trucks from other road users through the Blue Mountains.

“Corridor protection can deliver substantial benefits for individual jurisdictions and the nation”

(<http://infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/policy-publications/publications/files/CorridorProtection.pdf>)

Tourism in the region, primarily a car based industry, is being severely impacted by the congestion along the Great Western Highway. The Central West NSW Transport Needs Study 2010 identified tourism as the third largest industry in the region.

Regarding the Tourism 2056 Transport Plan, it is both light on and not solutions focussed. While happily identifying the tremendous role of regional tourism, it provides little advice on infrastructure or services to support dispersal from capital cities or support for intra and inter regional tourism particularly along key routes such as the Newell Highway.

Central NSW is facing both a competitive disadvantage of escalating proportions and a transport route to and from our capital city and ports which is dangerous. The route deficiencies have been identified numerous times and it is therefore important that there be a bias for action.

## Conclusion

Central NSW Councils are very disappointed that the Central West region appears to have been neglected in the draft Future Transport 2056 Strategy.

Most disappointing is that there has been no consultation to ensure alignment with this region's transport priorities and long term strategies notably the Bells Line corridor preservation and upgraded rail freight connections to optimise on inland rail through connections to the three NSW ports.

Where the plans are focused on public transport and solutions for Greater Sydney this region is looking for solutions to its significant transport constraints for passenger and freight transport.

In the short term we request confirmation that the corridor planning for the Bells Line of Road has been done. Refer to previous commitments.

We also request that the Bells Line Project be included as the connection to the Western Sydney Ring Road/Badgery's Creek.

Centroc is keen to continue working with you on a transport plan that identifies solutions for a safe swift link for freight and cars travelling between Sydney, Central NSW and further west.

If you require further information or clarification on comments in this submission please contact Ms Jenny Bennett, Executive Officer, at [jenny.bennett@centroc.com.au](mailto:jenny.bennett@centroc.com.au) or on 0428 690 935.

Yours sincerely,



Cr John Medcalf

**Chair**

Central NSW Councils (Centroc)