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Mr Philip Davies
Chief Executive Officer
Infrastructure Australia
GPO Box 5417
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By Email: IPSubmissions@infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Mr Davies

FEBRUARY 2018 UPDATE OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITY LIST

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission to Infrastructure Australia (IA) regarding the 2018 update of the Infrastructure Priority List.

The National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) comprises of Local Governments on the outskirts of capital cities nationally. Nearly 5 million people live in the fast growing outer suburbs around the nation, with populations growing at around double the national rate. They are areas in transition, playing a vital role in our cities.

A number of NGAA Member Councils will be submitting projects to IA. We support those submissions and seek to make some observations about the types of projects and the context within which we ask IA to consider them.

CONTEXT

- The fast growing outer suburbs are **absorbing a disproportionately large share of national population growth**.
- The fast growing outer suburbs play a **pivotal role** in supporting both city centres on the one hand, through supply of housing and labour and rural townships on the other through provision of jobs and services.
- There are **great opportunities as well as significant challenges**. These areas are in **transition**, economically as well as demographically. Their populations and their economies are becoming more diverse. There has been **strong jobs growth BUT population growth is outpacing it**.
- They are **not just the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker**. High tech jobs are growing faster than the national average. We want to build on these early emerging signs and nurture them.

- **Workforce participation and utilisation of skills** are very important for us. **Women and young people** are two groups in particular that are hard hit by lack of opportunities close to home. And their reduced levels of participation in education and in jobs for which they are qualified negatively impacts national productivity.

Barb Pocock¹ (Uni SA) calls it a **spatial leash** where many highly educated and skilled women are forced to abandon careers and take lower skilled jobs closer to home in order to fulfil their role as carers because it is too hard to get to jobs for which they are qualified.

- The evidence shows that there is a demonstrated infrastructure deficit, with infrastructure **investment falling well below population and jobs growth rates** in these areas. Between 2011-2016 these areas accommodated 35% of Australia's population growth and 25% of jobs growth but only received 13% of infrastructure investment².
- The fast growing outer suburbs **can no longer just rely on the assets available in the Metro CBD's**, due to the long and increasing commute times. Activity hubs further out are needed.
- To successfully transition to the new economy, the fast growing outer suburbs need **transformational infrastructure** that responds to the high level of existing demand for housing and jobs.
- Outer suburban residents often have **limited public transport** options and are paying more than other city dwellers in fuel and car repairs. Longer commuting distances and hours sitting on congested roads are common. The issue of **congestion** is uppermost in outer suburban communities' minds and they regularly voice their concerns to our member Councils. Their views are very clear – they want the issue solved because they are unhappy with their cost of living and the impact on their quality of life.

OBJECTIVES

Our Members want to ensure that new suburbs and growing communities have access to services, jobs and opportunities. They also want to ensure that the enablers for industry and jobs growth are in place. This will require activity hubs outside CBD's and improved connectivity both into CBD's and around greater metropolitan areas. Foundational infrastructure investment is needed to reduce the costs of congestion and support housing and industry growth in areas of rapid population growth on the outskirts of cities. Foundational infrastructure includes rail, strategic roads and high speed broadband. It requires:

- Better public transport and better road connections to assist in reducing **road congestion and nightmare commutes**

¹ Barbara Pocock, Natalie Skinner, Philippa Williams, Time Bomb: Work, Rest and Play in Australia Today, 2012

² Id, State of Australia's Fast Growing Outer Suburbs, 2017

- investment in **catalytic projects** that can grow jobs and services, create an investment multiplier effect and support activity clusters near where people live, not just in our heavily congested CBDs
- the infrastructure to support **emerging industries**, attract business investment and retain the talent needed to grow community prosperity and wellbeing. This includes high speed broadband as well as good transport connections and the amenity that businesses and talent are seeking.

THE CURRENT PRIORITY LIST

Initiatives relating to the fast growing outer suburbs on the current Priority Projects List remain a high priority. While not intending to reiterate all those projects here, two examples are:

- the **North South Rail Link in Western Sydney**, where further feasibility work has been undertaken. This is designed to maximise Western Sydney's productivity and realise the region's economic and employment potential through enhanced connectivity between the North and South West Growth Centres and economic hubs in outer Western Sydney including the Western Sydney Priority Growth Area and the key strategic centres of Blacktown, Penrith, Liverpool and Campbelltown.
- the full electrification of the **Adelaide to Gawler Rail line** in South Australia. This would drastically improve the commute for thousands of residents who work or study in the city from the Northern Suburbs of Adelaide. It would also open up the northern suburbs, Gawler and Barossa as a more viable location for business, employment, tourism and education.

NEW INITIATIVES

Rail

Rail projects such as those above and the new initiative below would help address Recommendation 3.3 in IA's Australian Infrastructure Plan which states that:

Governments should increase funding to address gaps in access to passenger transport on the outskirts of Australian cities...

They also have the ability to deliver more jobs and housing, reduce congestion, enable the creation of new town centres, create economic uplift and be catalytic in their regions.

New Initiative:

- **extension of the rail from Lalor to Wollert** in northern Melbourne to connect the rapidly growing population in the Epping North and Wollert growth corridor, forecast to triple by 2041, to jobs and opportunities in the CBD. Projected to take thousands of cars off the road, this initiative will reduce congestion, long commutes and overcrowding on the South Morang/ Mernda Rail service. It is expected to create jobs and make a significant injection into the economy in Melbourne's north whilst also boosting development and employment

opportunities in the Metropolitan Activity Centre in Epping, local activity centres and the Cooper Street employment area.

Strategic Roads

Strategic roads are foundational pieces of infrastructure for the fast growing outer suburbs, providing the connections to jobs and services, strategic links between activity centres, helping to increase housing supply by unlocking development potential, opening up employment land, supporting increased development in town centres and providing opportunities for business. These projects, whether regarded as individual projects or as a package of works, help to provide the connectivity needed for all parts of cities to function optimally. Their significance should not be underestimated.

New initiatives include:

- **Perth to Adelaide National Highway** (the Orange Route), to create a safer route for double road train vehicles currently travelling through residential areas and also saving operators significant time and cost.
- **Hazelmere Industrial Area** upgrades. Located north east of the Perth international and domestic airports and south of Midland Town Centre, the area provides access to air and rail freight transport as well as major road transport routes. Having grown significantly in recent years, including attraction of national and international companies, there is demand for an efficient transport network. Included are the following components:
 - Great Eastern Highway bypass and Roe Highway intersection
 - Great Eastern Highway bypass/Abernethy Road/Lloyd Street intersection
 - Roe Highway road upgrades
 - Helena River bridge (Lloyd Street)
- **Castlereagh Freeway**, to improve connectivity in Western Sydney, particularly to the existing Motorway network, improve flood evacuation capacity and increase development potential with further opportunity to connect to Regional NSW via a second cross of the Blue Mountains.
- **Upgrade Western Freeway** within the City of Melton to urban freeway standard as a key safety priority. The Western Freeway is the major road corridor between Melbourne and Adelaide, providing for major freight transport interstate and regionally. The section between Caroline Springs and Melton Township in Melbourne's West is a major transport corridor for residents to access education, employment and leisure activities. Additional interchanges and overpasses are required to provide improved access and ameliorate significant safety risks for all road users.

Freight

Taking freight vehicles out of residential areas is important for more efficient freight movements as well as a safer and more liveable environment for communities.

New initiatives include:

- **Midland Freight Rail** realignment to go through the Hazelmere Industrial area, removing a major barrier to the integrated redevelopment of the Midland regional centre, improving safety for residents and enhancing amenity and connectivity.
- The construction of the **Western Intermodal / Interstate Freight Terminal (WIFT)** is a key component of developing an integrated freight system for Victoria. The WIFT will move freight more efficiently by providing modern terminal facilities closer to the large industrial cluster in Melbourne's west, reducing the time and length of truck trips to and from Port Melbourne. In 2013, the WIFT was the subject of a joint pre-feasibility study, with the Victorian Government and the Australian Government. State and Federal investment is required to continue progress on this project through a land and infrastructure planning study and master plan development.

Package of Related Works

- **Mernda Town Centre** in northern Melbourne is intended to be a significant hub with a wide geographic reach and a mixture of uses including retail, agribusiness, rail station, community facilities, open space and housing. Cornerstone town centre projects will help address social disadvantage in the area as well as assist in demonstrating best practice growth area development. The package of related works requiring investment includes:
 - Space for health and human service provision
 - Social and affordable housing
 - Road duplication
 - Business incubator and co-working space
 - Library and performing arts facility
 - Regional aquatic and leisure centre

RECOMMENDATIONS

NGAA has been arguing for the need to take a more long-term strategic approach to infrastructure investment in the fast growing outer suburbs. Together, the fast growing outer suburbs and their need for improved connectivity is a nationally significant issue. We therefore recommend that IA moves beyond consideration of each individual project/initiative alone and takes a priority focus on the fast growing outer suburbs, given their national role in providing much of the housing and the labour that supports Australia's population growth. All of the infrastructure projects and initiatives relating to these areas should be viewed in this context and from the perspective of the wider impact they will have.

In order to support recommendation 3.3 in the Australian Infrastructure Plan relating to improved connectivity for growing outer suburbs, it is also recommended that IA lists as an initiative, a program of improved transport connections in fast growing outer suburbs. It is argued that this would be a program of related works including public transport, roads and freight routes, to address the infrastructure backlog and better plan for further growth.



Thank you for considering our submission.

If you require further information please contact NGAA's Executive Officer, Ruth Spielman, at ruth.spielman@ngaa.org.au or on 0407324178.

Yours Sincerely

**RUTH SPIELMAN
EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Atts



ATTACHMENTS

The following information has been attached to our emailed submission.

State of Australia's Fast Growing Outer Suburbs research

NGAA's submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Development of Cities