

Western
Sydney
Leadership
Dialogue

2023 NSW Election Priorities

2023 STATE ELECTION

The Dialogue's election policy and
projects priorities





Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and honour Aboriginal People who have cared for Country in Greater Western Sydney for at least 60,000 years and acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather.

The Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue thanks these Traditional Owners and we pay our respects to their Ancestors and Elders - past, present and emerging.

We also acknowledge the vital role played by our Local Aboriginal Land Councils, the modern custodians for all First Nations people who currently live in our region, home to one of the largest urban Aboriginal populations in Australia.

Further, we proudly support calls for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, as articulated in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

About the Dialogue

The Dialogue is a not-for-profit, regional think tank, leading a conversation about Greater Western Sydney.

We facilitate interaction between key opinion leaders, across industry, government, academia and the community, to inform public policy debate and to advance a regional agenda through research, analysis, advocacy and events.

Table of contents

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Transport infrastructure | 05 |
| Placemaking, amenity & culture | 12 |
| Health & community | 17 |
| Sustainability & resilience | 19 |
| Social & affordable housing | 22 |
| Social procurement | 24 |
| Education | 25 |



Graham Davis-King | Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council Board

The Dialogue's 2023 NSW Election Policy & Projects Priorities

Introduction

On 25 March 2023, voters across NSW will go to the polls to decide who will lead the state for the next four years. For some time both parties have declared that Greater Western Sydney will be the focal point for the election campaign. GWS is about to get much, much more attention from our politicians and media, and when we look to the margins it is no secret why. Out of the region's 26 seats, 8 are currently sitting on margins below 6.5%. As such, both major parties will be pitching policies and projects to defend or deliver the requisite sweep of key seats come election day.

The Dialogue is launching a specific advocacy campaign around the needs of the region, aimed at both the Government and Opposition, between now and the election. The following list of priority policies and projects will form the basis of our campaign.

Transport infrastructure

Job generating road projects

Beyond the transformative mega projects that are in various stages of delivery, Dialogue Partners are eager to see firm commitments to road projects that will make a material impact in the creation of jobs and economic value, particularly within the Aerotropolis and the Western Sydney Employment Area.

Without a transparent, staged and fully funded program of works over the coming years, there are clear risks that major investments in these precincts could be lost interstate. Landowners and potential investors need clarity around the confirmation and timelines of these projects.

The priority aspects of the job generating road projects package are as follows:

- **MAMRE ROAD STAGE 2**

Recommendation – Provide funding and a delivery timeline for Mamre Road Stage 2.

Stage 2 will unlock around 20,000 new jobs and can be delivered using substantial contributions from developer levies. Stage 1 is underway and has been funded, however a lack of agency coordination on Stage 2 is jeopardising investment in the precinct as prospective tenants look toward lower costs and greater planning certainty in other jurisdictions.

- **SOUTHERN LINK ROAD**

Recommendation – Prioritise the Southern Link Road to unlock job generating development.

This will provide a vital link between the Western Sydney Employment Area at Eastern Creek/ Horsley Park and the emerging industrial jobs hub of the Mamre Road Precinct. Connectivity with the M7 at Wallgrove Road and (in the future) towards WSA and the Aerotropolis via Mamre Road will ensure these precincts are some of Greater Sydney's most productive industrial areas in the future.

- **BADGERYS CREEK ROAD**

Recommendation – Provide priority funding for the upgrade of Badgerys Creek Road.

Immediate commitment from both sides of politics is required for this project. Badgerys Creek Road will be essential to the success of Bradfield City, as it is the only carriageway that will provide access to the new CBD in the medium term. If Badgerys Creek Road isn't upgraded, the Eastern Ring Road and north-south Aerotropolis Connector will need to be fast-tracked; an option that will be approximately five-times more expensive, according to estimates by Dialogue Partners. The Dialogue believes the cheaper, faster option to upgrade this road should be prioritised.

- **ELIZABETH DRIVE UPGRADES**

Recommendation – Upgrade Elizabeth Drive to accommodate growth in industrial and freight traffic around the Aerotropolis, Mamre Road and Kemps Creek.

While the Dialogue supports the M12 project, which will be a key long-term connection for WSA customers, we believe upgrades to the parallel Elizabeth Drive corridor would provide better value for money outcomes in the short-term. A series of upgrades to Elizabeth Drive must be delivered over the next 5-10 years to make it fit for purpose as a future link for high volumes of commercial traffic.

- **LUDDENHAM ROAD**

Recommendation – A coordinated strategy for funding, staging and delivery of upgrades to Luddenham Road to accommodate future traffic growth and land uses.

Luddenham Road will be a main arterial carriageway into the Aerotropolis north precinct and Sydney Science Park. The prioritisation and funding of feeder roads into the Aerotropolis has proven to be particularly challenging. Delays in decision-making on roads such as this, that service critical employment lands in and around the Aerotropolis, risks investment in job generating leases on some of Greater Sydney's last and most in-demand large-lot industrial estates.

- **FERRERS ROAD UPGRADE**

Recommendation – The Government should investigate options to ensure Ferrers Road is future-proofed for the expected growth in activity in the corridor between Eastern Creek and Wetherill Park.

There is growing local traffic demand along Ferrers Road and a need for upgrade works to accommodate such. This is influenced by intensifying land uses around Eastern Creek and Huntingwood, including the Sydney Motorsport Park Innovation Hub, new industrial and circular economy assets, and new leases throughout Western Sydney Parklands.



Other road projects

- **THE CASTLEREAGH CONNECTION CORRIDOR**
Recommendation – Match the Federal Government’s commitment to project planning and expedite the delivery of the Castlereagh Connection Corridor.

The Castlereagh Connection Corridor is an east-west dual carriageway connection between the M7 motorway at Richmond Road and Kurrajong Heights. This project offers value through its congestion-busting potential, promise to increase connectivity to areas of poor public transport access, and flood evacuation improvement. NSW must capitalise on promised federal funding for this project and progress early stages of this project – starting with the reserved 1950s “Castlereagh Freeway” corridor between Marsden Park/Hassall Grove and Stony Creek Road.

- **SPRING FARM PARKWAY STAGE 2**
Recommendation – Fund and deliver Spring Farm Parkway Stage 2.

This is the number one priority project for the Macarthur Region to address the heavy congestion along the Narellan Road corridor. Stage 1 is currently underway, however only Stage 2, which connects through to the Camden Bypass, will bring the full congestion-busting benefit to the currently unsustainable volume of commuters needing west-east access to the Hume Motorway and Campbelltown CBD every day.

- **OLYMPIC PARK ROADS**
Recommendation – The NSW Government should fast track the redevelopment of the Australia Avenue intersection.

The intersection of Australia Avenue and Homebush Bay Drive, also known as Sydney’s worst roundabout, had \$100m (half from the now Federal Government, half from the NSW Government) committed to its redevelopment in April 2022. Work, however, is not expected to commence on the project until 2025. The Dialogue urges the NSW Government to both prioritise the project and commit their share of the joint Federal and State funding needed to complete this project.



Western Sydney Airport Rapid Bus

Recommendation – NSW Government to prioritise the delivery of the WSA Rapid Bus Network before delays seriously impact transport connections to WSA.

The delivery timeline is rapidly approaching the point where the project will not be started early enough for the opening of Western Sydney Airport. Rapid bus connections will be pivotal for the success of WSA and the Aerotropolis, which will be dependent on effective transport connections. It will also be important for enabling Liverpool, Campbelltown and Penrith to leverage the benefits of these investments in the region. This was a promise made to the three local government areas of Penrith, Liverpool and Campbelltown as part of the Western Sydney City Deal. The Dialogue asserts that this network must be delivered as a priority.

Metro Rail

When the initial strategic planning of Greater Sydney took place, Metro Rail lines were treated as important enablers of finer grain public transport connectivity and included widely in planning. In the five-or-so years since this time, these important infrastructure projects have largely fallen off the agenda.

The following Metro Rail projects are those that the Dialogue believes to be highly important for the equitable connectivity of the region:

- **SYDNEY METRO WSA EXTENSIONS**
Recommendation – Clarity around delivery timelines for the northern and southern extensions of the SMWSA project is required from the NSW Government.
- **BRADFIELD TO GLENFIELD VIA LEPPINGTON LINE**
Recommendation – The Dialogue recommends that the NSW Government expedite the delivery of a metro extension from Bradfield to Glenfield via Leppington.

Communities and stakeholders in GWS have consistently raised concerns around the lack of government commitment and clarity around the planning and delivery of these corridors. While it is noted that the southern (to Macarthur via Narellan) and northern (to Tallawong via Marsden Park) extensions of the Sydney Metro WSA project are listed as long-term priorities by the NSW Government, the Dialogue would like to see the NSW Government provide further clarity around the delivery timelines for these extensions.

There is a significant need to connect communities living in the Macarthur region to WSA and the Aerotropolis, and to connect Sydney's two international airports by rail. Various alignments and rail type options have been explored for this link. Regardless, this link will become urgently required from 2026 onwards as WSA patronage grows. There is an opportunity to expedite this project if planning and funding is accelerated now, to minimise the lag time between the opening of WSA and the delivery of a southern connection to the Sydney Trains network.



- **“CENTRAL RIVER CITY METRO” - KOGARAH TO THE HILLS VIA BANKSTOWN AND PARRAMATTA**

Recommendation – NSW Government to commission a special investigation into route, staging and delivery options for the “Central River City” Metro project.

The lack of north-south connectivity through the Central River City has historically held back the potential of the region. The “Central City Metro” is a strategic mass transit corridor that would fundamentally change the jobs and living density of GWS and provide new economic opportunities to centres like Bankstown and Hurstville.

Across the Dialogue’s network of Partners and stakeholders, this project is most often cited as the most important medium-long term transport priority for Greater Sydney, and one which will fundamentally change the city’s economic geography. The Dialogue believes the Government should commission a special investigation into route options and staging for this project, much in the same way the public consultation process for the F3 to M2 (now NorthConnex project), in 2002, initiated a pathway to the eventual delivery of that project. Further, the Dialogue urges the NSW Government to provide clear commitment to the budgeting and completion of this investigation.

- **BANKSTOWN TO LIVERPOOL METRO EXTENSION**

Recommendation – Expedite planning and provide clarity on a timeline for the delivery of the Bankstown to Liverpool metro extension.

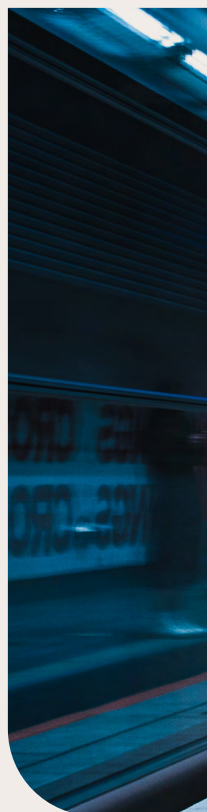
The Bankstown to Liverpool metro extension has been nominated by Dialogue Partners and stakeholders as a priority project, however it appears to have slipped off the agenda of the NSW Government. Recent updates to the TfNSW Future Transport plan, the GCC Six Cities plan and the State Infrastructure Strategy have not provided any further clarity on progress or likely timing of this project. In the interim, consideration should be given to changes in the operations of the existing heavy rail line to provide for an express shuttle service between the two cities, giving Liverpool and surrounding commuters access to the SW Metro station at Bankstown.

Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2

- **Recommendation** – Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2 to be fully funded as a priority to enable completion of the project in time for the delivery of Sydney Metro West.
- **Recommendation** – Provide staging options that enable the establishment of rapid bus transit services between Sydney Olympic Park and Parramatta as an interim measure.

Parramatta Light Rail Stage 2 will connect the Parramatta CBD to Sydney Olympic Park and will link the exploding population of commuters and residents living along that corridor of the Parramatta River to Sydney Metro West, Sydney Trains, and ferry services. It would also allow for urban regeneration and densification of the large social housing stock around Ermington along the route.

The delivery of the project has been delayed for five years and is now unlikely to be delivered before 2031 on current timelines. With zoning densities and populations only increasing, a delay of this length will result in stranded communities. The Dialogue is calling for the establishment of rapid bus transit services using the proposed Wentworth Point-Melrose Park bridge (an early stage of the eventual PRL Stage 2 route) as an interim measure.



Fast Rail

- **Recommendation** – NSW Government to accelerate the corridor and interchange planning for the Central River City Hub of the Fast Rail line.
- **Recommendation** – NSW Government to publish the confirmed full route of the Fast Rail line.
- **Recommendation** – NSW Government to publish a comprehensive Fast Rail strategy.

The Fast Rail is a project with region-shaping and nation-building potential. An interchange hub at Parramatta or Olympic Park will be a vital region activator and will encourage increased utilisation of the service as the heart of Greater Sydney is pulled further west over time. The Dialogue welcomes the project being added to the NSW Government's agenda through the GCC's Region Vision paper, especially the intent to begin the project with an intra-state network, rather than the much larger and less viable eastern seaboard.

We note, however, that the full fast rail route and delivery strategy has not yet been published, despite the GCC's Region Vision and the NSW Future Transport Strategy both referring to the fast rail corridor and funding already having been allocated from both federal and state governments for planning and corridor preservation.



Improving service levels for social outcomes

- **Recommendation** – Provide support for increased bus service levels to low-SEIFA index communities in GWS, including school bus routes.
- **Recommendation** – Incentivise employer-provided shuttle services to low-SEIFA index communities in GWS.

The Dialogue notes that social disadvantage is compounded by poor transport access in some of the region's most vulnerable communities. For example, residents in northern areas of the 2770 postcode have reported to BaptistCare's HopeStreet centre of experiencing commute times of up to two hours outside of peak periods to access work and other essential services by public transport. When adding in access to school or childcare for workers, the commute for many becomes unviable and an active disincentive to engage in the workforce. Unemployment in these communities is around four times the national average.

Decisions to provide (or indeed reduce) bus services to these areas must be compelled to account for the social costs and benefits associated with transport access, and there appears to be a strong case for government to subsidise additional service levels provided by private bus operators to low-SEIFA index communities. Building connectivity between these communities and the established and emerging job hubs of GWS must also be a priority, including via employer-provided shuttles supported by appropriate incentives.

Placemaking, amenity & culture

The pandemic years have triggered a substantial shift in the way people access and value their neighbourhoods, most notably in the emergence of the 15-minute local centre as the dominant strategic planning paradigm, rather than a sole focus on the 30-minute city. Accordingly, placemaking has taken on an elevated importance within our planning and transport agencies, complementing the work of local councils and developers.

A sustained focus on outcomes in this space is vital, as is well-located, affordable and accessible housing, as well as the "inclusivity" of places in the provision of culturally sensitive design and cultural infrastructure; a major and often-overlooked element.

Relocation of SBS Headquarters to Greater Western Sydney

Recommendation – The Dialogue calls on the NSW Government to consider value-adding initiatives to complement the SBS relocation proposal under the Federal feasibility study.

This is an issue that the Dialogue has been championing for over five years and has now been picked up by the Federal Government. Basing Australia's multicultural broadcaster in the nation's multicultural heartland would provide more focused, audience-driven programming. Both the administration and studios could leverage the talent and diversity of the area, not only delivering smart, multi-media local jobs, but providing a clearer insight into what's really going on in the region editorially.

Value-adding aspects, such as academic partnerships to focus on public sector communications with CALD communities, the development of a Greater Western Sydney Film & Television school (with consideration of its catalysing potential) and other investment, business and employment opportunities within the creative industries sector should be included in the NSW Government's proposal.

Improvement of cultural infrastructure

The Western Parkland and Central River Cities have significant gaps in cultural infrastructure, especially in comparison to the Eastern Harbour City. Not only are residents missing out on important opportunities and services, but it is also adversely affecting the potential of the economies in these regions.

While the Powerhouse Museum relocation to Parramatta has been a landmark investment, we cannot stop there. Revitalising stagnant city landmarks like the Roxy Theatre, and continuing integration and support for existing community arts centres like the Riverside Theatre, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Penrith's 'Joan' facility and Bankstown Arts Centre are actions that the Dialogue strongly recommends.



- **THE RIVERSIDE THEATRE, PARRAMATTA**

Recommendation – The NSW Government fund the current \$40m project shortfall and continue planning support to help deliver the actions of the Riverside Theatre Master Plan.

The Riverside Theatre and the City of Parramatta are currently working with Create NSW on the process of redeveloping this cultural landmark into a bigger, newer version of itself. Once complete, the cultural precinct, which will include the Powerhouse Museum, is forecasted to add between \$106 and \$422 million to the Parramatta economy. It is hoped that Riverside is a major beneficiary of the WestInvest Fund, but if not, it requires separate State support. Any redevelopment should consider adaptive use as a conference centre to both build local capacity and broaden Riverside’s potential commercial returns.

- **THE ROXY THEATRE, PARRAMATTA**

Recommendation – The Dialogue recommends that the NSW Government acquire the Roxy Theatre and return it to public hands.

The heritage listed Roxy Theatre is a Parramatta icon, so much so that even in its current non-functioning state, it was featured in the Dialogue’s [‘Best of the West’](#) publication. Given its public and cultural significance, the Dialogue urges the NSW Government to acquire the theatre and return it to public hands to ensure that it maintains its heritage importance and its amenity contribution. Additionally, due to its potential to service a broad cross section of the community, the NSW Government should support the prohibition of gambling and gambling uses at the site.

Greater Western Sydney's Aboriginal Art Gallery

Recommendation – NSW Government to begin stakeholder engagement for the creation of a First Nations Art Gallery and multimedia studio space in Greater Western Sydney.

There is an obvious need for a world class Aboriginal Art Gallery in Metropolitan Sydney. The location of the gallery should be subject to decision by the GCC's yet-to-be-formed First Nations Advisory Panel, and stakeholder engagement with GWS Aboriginal communities. The Dialogue, however, suggests that Blacktown, home to the largest urban Indigenous population in Australia, would be an ideal location for such, preferably somewhere accessible to the traditional M4 tourist route between Circular Quay and the Blue Mountains.

The addition of a First Nations Art Gallery and cultural hub in this region would be a valuable contribution to the growing movement towards reconciliation, truth-telling and cultural awareness. The tourism and economic benefits can also not be ignored. International travellers are increasingly seeking Australian First Nations arts and culture experiences which an art gallery and cultural hub could easily tap into. The Dialogue additionally urges the NSW Government to provide a clear timeline for when stakeholder engagement for this project will occur.

Town Centre Upgrades

Recommendation – Create a recurrent, contestable fund for town centre upgrades.

Beyond the one-off injection of local amenity project funding via the WestInvest initiative, there will be an ongoing need to support the delivery of town centre upgrades across the region so they can continue to be safe, accessible and meet the evolving needs of local communities. Given many town centres include a combination of major Council, commercial property (i.e. malls), registered clubs as well as rail stations and other NSW Government land holdings, the Dialogue believes these stakeholders are best placed to conceive and deliver placemaking projects with demonstrable community benefit, ideally in collaboration with one another and with appropriate co-contributions of private funds.

A contestable urban amenity fund for collaborative placemaking projects conceived and delivered by these stakeholders, with a recurrent funding stream, should be established to support optimal place outcomes and small-scale urban renewal in the town centres of GWS.

Supporting Greater Western Sydney's tourism potential

Recommendation – The NSW Government should provide \$20m over four years to promote GWS tourism in partnership with industry & councils to support the development of a tourism product, brand, and readiness to greet the opening of Western Sydney Airport.

The Dialogue strongly advocates for equitable funding and government support for the region's visitor economy assets, to secure the growth of the vast and under-recognised potential of the region's tourism sector.

To support the growth of the visitor and tourism economy in Greater Western Sydney leading up to the opening of the Western Sydney Airport in late 2026, the region's leading tourism operators have called on the NSW Government and State Opposition to commit the necessary funding, supported by an industry-led delivery unit to help co-ordinate, promote and attract visitation to the region.

The group, supported by the Dialogue, will work with Councils, Government and other key stakeholders, and is calling for \$20m annually over the next four years, to support:

- Product development
- Aviation attraction
- Brand development and marketing
- Specific Greater Western Sydney visitor economy initiatives aligned with the destination management plans.

Health & community

Health in the community

There has been a noticeable shift in planning focus to an awareness of the health impacts of the built environments of communities over recent years. This is an especially pertinent change for the vehicle-reliant GWS, and the Dialogue commends the NSW Government for this shift in perspective. Urban planning for future health is vitally important to the future of the region, and the Dialogue broadly supports any efforts to improve active transport links, food deserts and obesogenic environments.

Ban ‘junk food’ advertising on public assets

Recommendation – The NSW Government should ban ‘junk food’ advertising on public transport and NSW Government property.

The Dialogue joins other public health advocates, such as the Cancer Council, in urging the NSW Government to ban the marketing of discretionary ‘junk’ foods on public transport and government assets. Attention should be particularly paid to advertising which targets children. As outlined in our policy paper [‘the Heavy Issue’](#), there is growing consensus that discretionary food marketing targeted at children is contributing to poor diets, weight gain and obesity. These health problems are especially prevalent in GWS children, as the region is currently in the grips of a type II diabetes epidemic, the primary cause of which is obesity.

Health infrastructure & planning

In addition to improving community health through urban planning, ongoing commitments to the primary and secondary health infrastructure of our booming region also need to be firmly layered into the fabric of the region. Communities of Greater Western Sydney experience significant inequalities in health outcomes in comparison to the rest of Sydney. High-quality, appropriate and accessible health services will be an integral part of supporting the residents of this fast-growing region.

Bankstown Hospital Redevelopment & the creation of the Bankstown Health and Education cluster

- **Recommendation** – The NSW Government should relocate the Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital to the Bankstown TAFE site in the CBD.
- **Recommendation** – The relocation of the hospital should be leveraged by establishing downtown Bankstown as a Health and Education cluster, with the view to maturing into an innovation precinct.

Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital is already under pressure servicing the current population, and the footprint of the current hospital area does not allow for further expansion of facilities. The Bankstown area sits in a major growth corridor, with the local government area expected to grow by about 21% by 2036, which will result in nearly half-a-million people living in the local area. To meet the needs of the rapidly growing population, the hospital needs to be relocated to the Bankstown TAFE site, and the existing TAFE upgraded as well, in line with advice to government from health infrastructure, local clinicians and Canterbury-Bankstown Council.

Acknowledging & supporting the role of existing & emerging health and education precincts (HEPs) in achieving the strategic objectives of the region

- **Recommendation** – The NSW Government should recognise the importance of the role of existing and emerging HEPs, and their potential for growth, through embedding support for these services in strategic region planning.
- **Recommendation** – The Dialogue recommends that the NSW Government establish a funding stream for placemaking amenity projects to support established and emerging HEPs.

Through CHEP and similar precincts, ambitions like the 15-minute city with local jobs and education opportunities can be realised. Existing and emerging HEPs hold major opportunities for growth and diversification in health, education, research, innovation and associated health industries. These opportunities can be realised via private investment in related ‘smart jobs’ both within the precinct and on adjacent lands.

Sustainability & resilience

We know that parts of Greater Western Sydney are affected by a variety of environmental factors, including that they suffer disproportionately from the urban heat island effect, and that the region has been repeatedly battered by the effects of climate change over the last five years. It is imperative that accommodation for the region's growing and current population is managed innovatively and sustainably, otherwise, these issues and others will compound with disastrous results.

We note that Sydney Water has led government on the transition toward region-based water cycle solutions and climate-independent water supply initiatives. These are critical projects to ensure new residential and job generating precincts, particularly in and around the Aerotropolis, can be delivered as sustainably as possible.

Concessions for water management & sustainability projects with wide reaching benefits

Recommendation – The NSW Government should consider applying concessions for sustainability projects where the benefits are felt wider than the local area of the project.

The Dialogue believes that wherever sustainability projects are delivering whole-of-government and whole-of-community benefits, subsidies or concessions, such as reductions of stamp duty on land acquisition, should be considered to help meet the costs of inputs for key stakeholders.

Sustainability & climate resilience of the built environment

Recommendation – The NSW Government work with councils and industry to examine regulatory measures to ensure the GWS built environment is resilient.

The demise of the Design and Place SEPP in 2021-22 was a setback for the sustainability and amenity of the built environment in GWS, particularly in high-growth communities. While the SEPP may have been too wide-reaching to implement altogether, Dialogue Partners continue to argue that elements of it are vital to our future resilience to climate change, and that inaction and preservation of the status quo on this issue is simply not an option. One such example is the urban heat mitigating potential of light-coloured roofs on new developments.

The NSW Government should return to elements of the Design and Place SEPP, and work with local government and the development sector to examine how and where specific measures can be implemented wherever they contribute to climate resilience.

Improvement, protection & support of Greater Western Sydney's blue grid

- **Recommendation** - The Dialogue urges the NSW Government to improve planning frameworks for stormwater management so that water quality outcomes are catchment specific and align with waterway swimability goals.
- **Recommendation** - Establish a council grant program to improve blue/green grid sites across GWS that provide public access to the region's waterways.

The NSW Government has a responsibility to ensure that the widespread and ongoing development of Greater Western Sydney does not further degrade the quality of its natural waterways. This blue grid will be vital for both recreational opportunities and achieving cooling outcomes for the region.

Dialogue partners have stressed that without improvements, the increasing urban development pressure will gradually degrade the region's waterways. This will render many commonly held liveability and sustainability goals, like unlocking the recreational potential of rivers and utilising the blue grid to improve and cool the green grid, impossible to achieve.

The GCC has conducted a thorough audit of key blue grid sites, which flagged opportunities for improvements to parks, trails and access points to Sydney's creeks and rivers. The Dialogue would like to see the work expanded upon, to create a priority list of projects for business case development and funding consideration by councils and relevant state agencies under a centrally funded grant program.

Attributing value to green infrastructure

- **Recommendation** – The NSW Government collaborate with stakeholders to develop and publish frameworks that support the development of business cases for the integration of green infrastructure.
- **Recommendation** - Consider implementing a pricing and funding mechanism for green infrastructure projects.

During consultation with stakeholders, the Dialogue has heard that while enthusiasm for implementing greening/cooling processes and technologies at a local level is high, the business case for green infrastructure not yet being a well-established concept often stymies collaboration between private infrastructure providers, developers, and planning consent authorities.

This fragmented pathway for collaboration is adversely affecting the implementation of projects that would not only progress the NSW Government's sustainability goals for the region, but also limits the growth of jobs and technology advancements in this space.

Water recycling targets

Recommendation – A target of 100 Gigalitres/20% of recycled water in Sydney's water use 'budget' by 2030 be set as a priority for the NSW Government.

Since ['the Hot Issue'](#) was published in 2019, the Dialogue has been urging the NSW Government to take stewardship, and recognise the vast benefits of water recycling. There are a wide variety of benefits to increasing our water recycling ability, including easing our dependence on unpredictable rainfall, and retaining a vital 'cooling and greening' tool in our local communities.

Electrification of the NSW Government's public transport fleet

Recommendation – The NSW Government partner with industry to achieve its original ambition to replace all diesel buses within a decade.

The NSW Government has recently revealed that the timeline of their goal of converting all 8,000 diesel public buses to electric by 2030, has blown out to 2047. This switch is an important step in the Government's move towards net-zero, however the global transition to new technology has been marked by teething problems as authorities and operators learn to optimise the management of electric buses, as well as the batteries and plant required to support operations.

The urgency to act remains, regardless of unforeseen hurdles that may have arisen since then—Minister Andrew Constance announced the original fleet replacement goal. There are also substantial local manufacturing opportunities to be unlocked through deliberate efforts to accelerate the roll-out of zero emissions buses. Collaboration with industry on alternative fleet procurement approaches will be critical.

A 'three-pronged' strategy for the mitigation of flood effects in Greater Western Sydney

- **Recommendation** – The NSW Government needs to urgently upgrade the road evacuation infrastructure to help residents more safely escape the Hawkesbury-Nepean bathtub, during flood events.
- **Recommendation** – The Dialogue urges the NSW Government to invest in rainfall-independent water supply in the medium-term.
- **Recommendation** – The NSW Government should commit to the delivery of the Warragamba Dam expansion, for the purpose of flood mitigation only, in the long-term.

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment has not signed off on the Warragamba Dam wall-raising project. The Dialogue is championing a three-pronged plan focusing on protection, mitigation and evacuation.

Firstly, an expanded dam wall will delay flooding downstream and maintain existing water levels to protect environmental and cultural heritage above the dam. Secondly, upgraded water recycling capacity will reduce the need for potable major water storage in Warragamba and allow for more room in the dam for flood risk mitigation. Lastly, building the long-awaited Castlereagh Connection from Marsden Park to Richmond, plus associated roads and bridges, will allow residents to escape rising water and improve connectivity for communities along the 1951 road reservation north of Mount Druitt.

Social & affordable housing

The shortage of social and affordable housing in our region was documented in the 2019 report by Wentworth Community Housing (now Link-Wentworth) and the Western Sydney Community Forum's 2019 report 'Home in Western Sydney'. It found that in 2019, there was a shortfall of more than 67,000 homes, and that plugging this shortfall would require around 6,500 new dwellings per year.

The Federal Government has put housing at the top of its agenda, and the NSW Government has also upped its ambition to deliver new affordable housing. It is therefore an opportune time to examine the policy settings at all levels of government that can help streamline planning, investment and delivery of new social and affordable housing.

Supplying more social housing

Recommendation – Set a new state-wide target and strategy to increase the supply of social and affordable housing to comprise 10% of NSW housing stock, from the current level of 4%.

It is important to ensure that growing the supply of social housing is not de-prioritised as affordable or key worker housing provides a more favourable investment profile. Both are important, however the backlog of demand for social housing and growing rates of homelessness demand stronger action to house our most vulnerable.

The Dialogue supports calls from the Property Council to increase the proportion of social and affordable housing in the overall housing stock of NSW from its current share of 4% to 10%, noting that this proportion has barely changed over the last decade, despite residential development booming in that period.

Public to community sector title transfers

Recommendation – Transfer 30,000 social housing properties to the community housing sector in contestable tranches of 3,000 to 5,000 units.

In 2022, with a scaled-up CHP sector and private capital ready to invest, the Dialogue believes more ambitious large-scale estate renewals are needed to move the dial on social housing supply and to address the maintenance backlog that has turned our public housing assets into liabilities in many parts of the state.

We also believe that such a move is necessary to encourage further scale and commercial sophistication in the CHP sector and to attract sustained institutional investment, at a time when the Federal Government is eager to finance and crowd-in more private investment in social and affordable housing.

Inclusionary zoning – mandates, not targets

Recommendation – Introduce mandated inclusionary zoning on government owned land and for re-zoned and redeveloped land around new metro stations, to deliver 30% social and affordable housing.

We reiterate our standing position in support of a 30% inclusionary zoning mandate for social and affordable housing (including the full range of sub-market typologies) around new Sydney Metro stations.

More broadly, while the GCC's target for 30% affordable housing on government land is a substantial upgrade on previous targets, the Dialogue would like to see mandates rather than targets in place on land that is owned by the taxpayers of NSW.

Planning acceleration for new developments

Recommendation – Provide accelerated planning pathways to prioritise residential development that delivers new social and affordable housing.

The Dialogue is calling for the NSW Government and Opposition to commit to the introduction of accelerated planning pathways to prioritise residential development projects that incorporate an element of social and/or affordable housing. Ideally, this would involve implementing a hierarchy framework, whereby delivery of new social housing is afforded the highest priority, followed by affordable rental and so on. This would help to streamline delivery of new stock and provide incentives for developers to integrate social and sub-market typologies into housing projects.

There should also be consideration given to allowances on height and mass, beyond existing controls, if developers are to offer affordable and social housing units within a development that are well in excess of minimum requirements and are managed by reputable Community Housing Providers.



Social procurement

While we are seeing some positive and encouraging developments in the way social procurement is integrated in public spending decisions and the approach by government, industry, and the wider community, more can be done to secure a higher dividend.

The positives in this space are too big to miss. Dialogue Partners are increasingly eager to engage with the value-generating potential of the social enterprise sector. Success in this space would see benefits that cut across all seven of the topic groups referenced in this document. International examples are showing that, with the right policy settings, leveraging social procurement is returning 9-30% of the project's dollar spend in social value.

- **Recommendation** – Develop a NSW Social Procurement Framework, with inbuilt prioritisation of bottom-up approaches to local social procurement.
- **Recommendation** – Develop a NSW Social Enterprise Strategy.
- **Recommendation** – Establish a Greater Western Sydney Infrastructure Pathways Program.

The Dialogue's 2021 project [Humanising Infrastructure](#), in conjunction with RPS, examined some of the opportunities to leverage record levels of infrastructure investment through a more coordinated approach to social procurement and social value-driven procurement decisions, with particular focus on the involvement of the social enterprise sector.

NSW needs a bold and visionary whole-of-government Social Procurement Framework that includes ambitious targets and reporting mechanisms. The Social Procurement Framework needs to prioritise bottom-up approaches, by inbuilding it into the Framework from the start. NSW has the opportunity to develop a new type of policy in this space, one which will ensure communities needs and priorities are at the heart of Social Procurement projects.

Additionally, a NSW Social Enterprise Strategy will be critical to the success of the framework by ensuring a strong social enterprise sector. Lastly, a Western Sydney Infrastructure Pathways Program (WSIPP) will respond to the need to centralise the delivery of skills development, cultural and gender diversity targets, and pre-employment and local supply chain engagement.



Education

Optimising school facility utilisation for the community

- **Recommendation** – The Dialogue recommends that the NSW Government expand the ‘Share Our Space’ program to include school libraries, prioritising roll out to areas with high concentrations of socioeconomic disadvantage.
- **Recommendation** – The NSW Government should expand the ‘Share Our Space’ program to include afternoons and evenings, prioritising areas of high residential density and population growth that have inadequate access to high quality green spaces.

NSW Public schools are caches of highly valuable social infrastructure which should be used to target gaps in social outcomes through targeted programs of unlocking facilities for community use. Opening school libraries in areas of high concentrations of socioeconomic disadvantage can increase access to computers and the internet and alleviate pressure on local government libraries.

Allowing playground and green space access in the afternoons and evenings (not just the weekends) in high-and-medium-density communities will improve resident’s access to high-quality open spaces. In regions like the Central River City where there will be very limited opportunities to provide additional green infrastructure to communities, increasing the quality and utilisation of existing spaces is important.

Vertical School Pilot Program

Recommendation – The Dialogue recommends that the NSW Government introduce a ‘Vertical School Pilot’ Program to address the need for schools in high-growth areas.

The Dialogue is supportive of plans to maximise public land and to explore innovative ways to deliver school infrastructure, particularly in high-density areas in the region. This could include examining opportunities for the NSW Government to work in partnership with retail, commercial and residential developers to deliver mixed-use schooling facilities, especially in the Central River City, that can not only meet education demands, but also address other social, housing and community needs.

Education infrastructure

Recommendation – Following the success of NSW Schools Infrastructure, we recommend that the NSW Government consider the broadening that agency’s remit to cover the physical assets of TAFE NSW as well as delivery and management of various public early education facilities.

The establishment of NSW Education Infrastructure would provide greater scale in delivery of VET facilities and free up TAFE management to drive the service offering and ongoing reform of this vital agency, without the constraints of its infrastructure legacy. It could also speed up the integration of school, TAFE and university facilities, which the Dialogue strongly supports.

Western Sydney science & arts schools

Recommendation – We call on the NSW Government to speed up the development of specialist campuses to offer STEM and Arts curriculums in Greater Western Sydney.

Greater Western Sydney needs to be able to train and retain their homegrown talent. Specialist high schools in GWS will attract the most gifted and ambitious teachers and students in the region and beyond. With hands on, specifically directed learning paths, these schools will smooth the path to these student’s successful futures.

Supporting TAFE to progress the region

- **Recommendation** – Provide funding & planning support for the Liverpool Health & Education Precinct.
- **Recommendation** - Provide funding & planning support for the Bradfield Specialist Advanced Training Centre.





In meeting the goals of economic and social policy, TAFE NSW is a critical asset of the NSW Government, especially in GWS. Providing planning support and funding for the Liverpool Health and Education Precinct and the Bradfield Specialist Advanced Training Centre will ensure TAFE continues to play a key role in meeting the labour and technology needs of industry and the aspirations of the people of our region.





Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue

If you would like to know about partnering with the Dialogue, please email info@westernsydney.org.au requesting our company credentials or an event sponsorship prospectus.

-  @WSLDialogue
-  @BestoftheWest
-  westernsydney.org.au
-  (02) 8318 8028