

8 September 2022

RAIL A FOCUS OF GREATER CITIES COMMISSION DISCUSSION PAPER

The region's peak business organisation, Business Illawarra, has today welcomed several of the themes contained in the Greater Cities Commission's Six Cities Region Discussion Paper as important recognition of the Illawarra-Shoalhaven's economic potential.

Business Illawarra also welcomed the Paper's acknowledgement of the need to better connect the Illawarra-Shoalhaven to Western Sydney, which has been the subject of long-standing advocacy by the organisation.

"The GCC's Paper has identified the significant capability of our region, which is matched by significant opportunities that are coming our way in the form of major investments by the private sector," said Business Illawarra Executive Director Adam Zarth.

"The Paper also calls out the need for enhanced rail connectivity, saying 'the development of a new rail connection to Western Sydney is a crucial link that would support additional rail freight capacity in and out of Port Kembla.'"

"This supports our long-standing advocacy for rail connectivity to Western Sydney in the form of a South West Illawarra Rail Link, and more recently our call for \$10 million to fund a rail resilience masterplan to address the many points of failure in the southern rail network that recent weather events have drawn into focus having caused major challenges for exporting businesses across the state."

"Through the GCC's Draft Cities Plan process for our region, due to be completed in 2023-24, and all other avenues available, we will be advocating for this planning work to be completed – and for it to include a complete assessment of the South West Illawarra Rail Link proposal."

"The Paper also acknowledges how the Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone will contribute significantly to our national drive to net zero emissions and our bright future in clean manufacturing clustered around our world-class steelworks at Port Kembla."

"Our local technology sector is another driver of high-value jobs for locals and of course the University of Wollongong is the catalyst for much of the innovation required to bring these opportunities to life. The paper acknowledges these, as well as how our region is also primed to take advantage of major future developments in maritime defence and aerospace capability."

"These features of the region are highlighted by the GCC as part of proposed 'Innovation Districts' that acknowledge our strengths in freight and logistics and for cultural and creative industries."

"We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ms Jacki Johnson having been appointed to serve as the new City Commissioner for the Illawarra Shoalhaven City on 2 September and we look forward to working closely with Ms Johnson who will lead the planning for our city for the next four years," said Mr Zarth.

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About Business Illawarra

Formerly the Illawarra Business Chamber, Business Illawarra is the region's peak business organisation; a not-for-profit advocacy group dedicated to the economic development of the Illawarra.