

## **Comments on the Greater Macarthur Preliminary Land Release Strategy and associated documents (particularly in relation to Wilton Junction).**

The preliminary Greater Macarthur Land Release Strategy and the associated documents provide a large amount of information about the dreams for a monstrously sprawling city of Sydney.

However, much of the information does not cover the reality of the distance from Campbelltown (30km)/ Sydney (83km) and the lack of infrastructure in the Wilton area.

The SEPP outlines future considerations for upgrading infrastructure for the development of the Greater Macarthur area but it fails to ensure sufficient infrastructure and especially not in a timely fashion.

Already there are insufficient health, education, telecommunications, public transport, water and sewerage services for the current population and the plans either do not provide feasible ways of overcoming this insufficiency, or suggest that Campbelltown would serve people living in this area. It is noted that infrastructure upgrades in these services are considered long-term upgrades but that these “infrastructure requirements will need to be delivered through an appropriate mechanism, which could take the form of a Special Infrastructure Contribution (SIC) at no cost to government or a series of planning agreements entered into between the Minister for Planning and the relevant proponents” i.e. will either not happen or will be very, very long-term upgrades and will also place an extra financial burden on new homebuyers.

### **Employment and Infrastructure**

Perhaps the Achilles heel of the plans, at least around Wilton Junction, is the issue of employment.

The current Masterplan for Wilton Junction was touted by the developers in public meetings as a development that will impinge only marginally on the traffic burden and that there would be little need for a significant improvement in road infrastructure and rail services since in their words; “most of the new residents would work from home or will be working where they live”.

Such a naïve and unrealistic approach continues to dominate the scene with very little consideration of the reality of the massive new development.

To be able to afford homes in the new suburbs most purchasers of new homes would already have established jobs that require commuting outside the area, to the city or other business hubs.

Considering the already high unemployment rate in the Wollondilly area the rate of unemployment is likely to increase over time. New businesses that might move in are unlikely to provide sufficient new opportunities to accommodate the old and new population and many businesses are also likely to encourage their staff to move into the area, or at least to commute to the new business location.

As the economic and employment analysis document states “there will be limits to the extent to which the GMIA can attract strategic jobs, given its remote location on Sydney’s urban fringe. To improve employment opportunities and overcome the social and economic costs of low employment access for potential GMIA residents, improving access to jobs outside of the region via transport interventions will be critical.

The development of future jobs in the GMIA will require a strong and ongoing economic development ‘push’. Again, this will require significant infrastructure intervention, such as both transport and education and health facilities, to build local capacity.”

## Transport

Most new residents contrary to fairytales touted by developers and beguiled local councils would need to commute daily resulting in a very significant increase of traffic and the creation of bottle necks at junctions and intersections including the ingress and exit roads to/ from the Hume highway.

The burden of traffic that will be generated by the new development would also affect the M5 that is already a “parking lot” during peak hours and the M7.

The lack of in-depth consideration of the population growth and its needs extends also to rail services. While an effective rail system could mitigate some of the traffic issue there are apparently no plans to upgrade the rail services beyond Macarthur in the near future.

## Roads

- New planned infrastructure and infrastructure upgrades should be implemented prior to the approval of housing in the region. Currently there is a significant traffic issue on Narellan Road that is being partly catered to with current ongoing upgrades. However, these are a stopgap measure and are unlikely to solve the volume of traffic on the road. With thousands of new houses planned and the limited transport options available to the people living there it should be a priority to implement infrastructure before further congestion is added to the region.
- Currently, there is a proposed new intersection of the Hume Highway at Menangle. When this intersection is designed, it should be considered high throughput and preferably developed as a cloverleaf intersection to reduce the opportunity for future traffic snarls as have occurred on Narellan Road.
- The upgrade of the Menangle road area should be considered top priority and should be made into a dual carriageway where possible between Picton Road and Macarthur. It should also be improved to improve the quality of the road.
- Further consideration for traffic leaving and entering the Broughton School would make roundabouts a useful means for continued car travel.
- There should be a consideration to upgrade Picton Road/Hume Highway intersection in the plans. With the amount of traffic on Picton Road and in order to avoid a repeat of the mistakes so well executed when the freeway was constructed and an exit to Campbelltown and Narellan was ill planned, a cloverleaf must be constructed as originally proposed by the engineers for the Picton/Wollongong exit.
- Traffic lights at the Picton Road/Hume Highway intersection would not address the volume of traffic expected during peak hours although they currently appear as an attractive alternative due to relatively low cost.
- Furthermore, there should be consideration for upgrade of the entire Picton Road between Picton to Wollongong to dual carriageway wherever there aren't restrictive elements in place. With increased traffic along Picton road, a roundabout and or turning lanes should be implemented for the Picton Road/Wilton Park Road intersection.
- The proposed heavy load depot at Wilton Junction should be considered in light of the people already living in the area and should have minimal impact on the area, i.e. minimum noise, etc. Also the planned service station in the area should be planned so as not to impact nearby houses with noise and lights.
- Internal road infrastructure of new housing developments should be maximised for future use. Road widths in most current housing developments are too narrow for cars driving both ways and parking e.g the Bingara Gorge development has created failed road linkages by constructing narrow

roads that trucks are unable to drive through if required such as with the diversion of traffic due to Picton Road closures.

## **Rail**

There is a need to implement strong public transport options for the Wilton Junction housing development and for other areas in the GMIA. Not only for the sake of the area but also for the benefit of commuters downstream from the new developments.

The proposed Dom Barton rail line has at this juncture has only been considered for commercial/freight trains. This should be modified to include option for public transportation.

The Picton railway station is unlikely to be able to accommodate a significant increase in the number of commuters' cars and a functional car park is essential.

Government should have the foresight to upgrade the train services to the Wilton area including electrification of the line from Macarthur to Picton/Tahmoor with a branch to Wilton Junction and timetables that reflect the needs of the community. Currently it takes about 25 minutes to drive to Campbelltown station but 1 hour and 5 minutes (plus fitting in with the timetables) to travel by bus and train. That's at least an extra hour of travel per day if you can get timetables to fit.

## **Parking**

Within each development, especially the proposed commercial hubs, adequate parking areas should be planned. Parking in many new developments is difficult and creates a reduced road driveability and visibility due to their narrowness (eg Narellan vale, Mt Annan, Bingara Gorge) .

Another example - Park Central area in Campbelltown was consolidated as health specialists district. However, while maximising the health utilisation of the area, it failed to incorporate sufficient parking for people using those services. Underground parking should also have been planned for to reduce the congestion when people are trying to park at peak business hours. Even the residential area parking is a failure as the roads are too narrow and much of the housing in the area has no garages, etc. to get residents cars off the street let alone guests visiting the area.

## **Parks**

There should be significant open space area and parkland within the new developments. These open spaces should not be relegated solely to golf courses and overdeveloped 'play complexes'. Natural areas significantly improve the look and feel of suburbs. Open/undeveloped spaces that are not concreted are important for maintaining an area's water table and for reducing the development of micro-climates that increase the heat of an area.

## **Biodiversity**

Endangered flora, fauna and ecosystem are identified in the analysis but the planned land release maps still encroach on these areas.

Biodiversity is not maintained by building on every possible piece of land. Wildlife corridors have to remain intact and open. Golf courses instead of woodlands introduce non-native species and reduce the public amenity of 'bushland'.

## **Health Facilities**

The analysis discloses that there are no existing regional health facilities located in the GMIA with residents predominantly travelling north to seek treatment.

Medical, emergency and rehabilitation services in the Macarthur Region are provided by the NSW Department of Health through the South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD). The Health services comprise two public metropolitan hospitals, three community health centres and one youth health service. The closest hospitals to Wilton Junction are Campbelltown (32 km), Wollongong (34km), Bowral (44km) and Liverpool Hospital (55 km).

The analysis does not provide data to indicate that the current health and emergency facilities are capable of dealing with the increased demand as a result of the increase in the population size.

## **Telecommunications**

Currently the communication infrastructure for the Wollondilly area is sluggish and overburdened. A new exchange closer to the development should be built to accommodate a top tier communications capacity. This should also accommodate existing residents in the Wilton area.

## **Education**

The number of public schools in the southern local area was incorrect. We need more and better public schools including High Schools in the short term scenario rather than as “later” infrastructure.

The current local High School at Picton is already operating over its capacity.

## **The cost to the young**

**“Recognition and support** from the metropolitan or State Government will be critical. A focussed effort in policy, planning, funding, will be key but also public investment in education and health facilities. “

The developments are presented as “no cost to government developments”. Indeed a miracle except that if infrastructure etc. does not cost government money, it is the developer that has to pay and not being in the charity business they would pass the cost on to buyers.

This policy contributes directly to the unaffordability of housing in major cities.

## **A Better Way**

The primary issue is that future government planning efforts should focus on consolidating housing in job hubs that already exist. Planning for the future of Sydney should be aimed at promoting development of high and medium density housing near or in areas that are already well developed. This would reduce some of the burden of infrastructure development and inhibit the ever-increasing expansion of the outskirts of Sydney into rural and bushland areas that is unsustainable.