

Joint Submission to the Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan

This is a joint submission to the Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan produced by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment by The Goulburn Group Inc (TGG) and Community Energy for Goulburn Inc. (CE4G).

How to read this submission:

All text coloured blue is lifted directly from the Draft Plan and is used to reference comments and submissions.

The submission is divided into five parts, each reflecting a section of the Draft Plan:

- Part 1: Introduction
- Part 2: Goal 1
- Part 3: Goal 2
- Part 4: Goal 3
- Part 5: Goal 4

Specific submissions are made at the end of each Part.

General Comments on the Draft Plan

TGG and CE4G congratulate the Department of Planning and Environment for attempting to construct a 20 year plan for the South East region. In particular, we are pleased that the Department has made an effort to look beyond the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle, and paid attention to the needs of regional Australia, and the SE region in particular.

The comments and recommendations contained in this response are confined to those areas in which we claim to have some interest, understanding or expertise. We have not commented on areas outside our areas of interest. Recommendations or Submissions are contained at the end of each section and are contained within boxes.

Part 1: INTRODUCTION

FORWARD

“The South East and Tablelands region is renowned for scenic rural landscapes, spectacular mountain and coastal scenery, and historic towns and villages. It’s a great place to live and popular year-round with tourists.” Hon K. Hodgkinson

Comment:

The region is also famous for its abundant renewable resources and the opportunities this presents for leading Australia in renewable energy innovation. More renewable energy is produced in this region than anywhere else in Australia, yet this document provides only scant recognition of this potential.

“INTRODUCTION”

“Evidence to underpin the Plan

This Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan (draft Plan) incorporates research and expert advice about future development challenges and opportunities.”

Comment:

There is no reference here to any documentation on climate change, and only one reference out of thirty two in the bibliography. This ignores the work done on global warming by the CSIRO, the Dept Meteorology, ANU, or the IPCC on climate projections into the near and medium term.

Apart from a reference to the Renewable Energy Action Plan, this has resulted in a document devoid of any serious analysis of what impact global warming will have on the region, how it can be mitigated, how climate issues impact on the four goals, and what steps can be made in this region to help the NSW and Australian governments meet their obligations to COP 21 and to reducing its CO2 emissions.

In that respect, implementing the plans outlined in this document will fail the residents of the region and the state. The opportunity for this region to lead all the rural communities in this state will be lost.

“THE VISION”

“The ACT will continue to be the primary driver of growth for most of the region. The growth of Canberra will provide opportunities to access a wider range of services and job opportunities in public administration, professional services and education.”

Comment:

While we agree that the ACT will be a major driver for the region, there is no reference in the whole document to the commitment by the ACT Government to become 100% renewable by the year 2020 – well under the 20 year plan outlined in this document.

This commitment is a major driver for renewable industries in the whole of Australia, and already this region has lost 2 major wind farm developments primarily because of the negative publicity that a very small minority of residents or part time residents have created in the region. Little or no support from the NSW government has meant that Victoria and New England have profited from the ACT’s policies, despite the fact that the region surrounds the ACT and has an abundance of renewable resources.

The ACT renewable energy target has the potential to be one of the biggest drivers of economic activity in the region, yet this document pays scant attention to this issue. This is a major failing of the document.

General comment on the Vision:

The “Vision” outlined in the paper is particularly inadequate in regards to future-proofing the region from the major climatic disruptions that will inevitably occur over the next 20 years. It is a short sighted rehash of policies that have been tried repeatedly in this and other rural regions. It is predictable, mundane, Sydney and bureaucratic centric, and already redundant.

A truly visionary document would provide a far more imaginative and innovative template for a region that is open to new ideas and directions for this century.

General comment on the Document:

While the document is a welcome attempt to at least pay attention to a region other than the Sydney Metropolitan Area, it looks very much like a document designed to appease rather than to propose real and sustainable action. As such it is welcome, but sadly disappointing.

There are seventy five commitments from the NSW Government outlined in this document (76 if you include a commitment in 2.3).

Of these, less than 25% are commitments to real actions to achieve a practical outcome. The rest are studies, plans, collaborations, reviews, supports or commitments to partnerships, etc. (See Appendix C).

While support, studies, reviews and collaborations are vitally important, it appears that most of the work proposed here is for further work to be done by the Department in working out what should actually be done. Real, concrete action to implement plans, or to commence projects that will benefit the region directly and in a reasonable time frame are sadly lacking.

Further, the remaining 75% of proposals lack any reference to milestones. What timetable is proposed for most of these studies, collaborations, reviews, plans, etc? How much of the 20 years will be taken up in preparing to work out what to do?

This region does not need yet more studies and investigations about what might be possible in the future. Most local councils have tried this approach and repeatedly failed to move their LGAs forward. What is needed is a clear outline of practical actions that are informed by a coherent and consistent vision of what the region should look like in 20 year's time.

SUBMISSION ON INTRODUCTION AND VISION

The clearest and most obvious vision for this region encompasses renewable energy and renewable industries. The NSW Government should be immediately planning for the establishment of a renewable cluster in this region, leveraging off both the already substantial and diverse renewable energy generation in the region, and the determination of the ACT government to progress to a 100% renewable economy within the next 5 years.

Submission to the Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan

Section 2: Goal 1 – Sustainably manage growth opportunities arising from the ACT

General comment:

Despite the heading “Sustainably managing growth...” , there is almost no attention given in this section to the long term meaning of the word “Sustainable”. In the solutions proposed to meet this goal, there has been no attention given to any solutions that take climate change into account. Unless this community is prepared for the inevitable disruptions that will be caused by global warming, no manner of planning, modes, study, or indeed action will be adequate to meet this challenge in the immediate and the medium term.

To that extent, this whole section is inadequate.

ACT as the driver in the region.

“As a capital city, Canberra is the driver of growth for the surrounding local government areas within the region.” (p17)

Contrast with:

“In 2016 the ACT Government legislated a new target of sourcing 100% of the Territory’s electricity from renewable sources in the ACT or across the National Electricity Market by 2020.

Under the ACT Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy) Act 2011, renewable energy generators are granted a feed-in tariff through a competitive process. This approach is the first of its kind in Australia and will ensure that the Territory can access proven technology at the lowest possible cost.”

ACT Government – Environment and Planning Directorate. June 2016

Comment: Renewables as an Economic Driver

The ACT Government has embarked on a major policy directive that will revolutionise energy generation and delivery in the Act and beyond. The NSW Government is dragging its heels on the issue and, discounting the amount of renewable energy from the Snowy Hydro Scheme, is one of the poorest performing states in the uptake of renewable energy.

Two wind auctions by the ACT have resulted in wind farms outside the region being built to supply the ACT. Minister Simon Corbell is on record as saying that the ACT will only consider tenders that can demonstrate community enthusiasm for renewable energy. Despite the fact that this region has some of the best wind resources in the country and has ready access to multiple points on the NEM grid, this region lost out to these auctions because of poor planning, an aggressive minority of complainants (some of whom have had significance influence in political circles), and poor support from the NSW Government.

This region stands to benefit handsomely from the ACT Government’s policies on renewables, provided the Planning Department recognises this significant driver of economic benefit and plans to take this industry sector seriously for this region.

Canberra not the only economic driver.

While the ACT is a very important economic driver for the region close to its borders, its importance declines the further away the community is situated from those borders. In the

northern parts of the region, Sydney is still an important driver, as is rural industry, renewable industries, and interconnections between regional towns.

DIRECTION 1.1 Provide well-located and serviced land for housing in the Greater Capital to meet demand

ACTION 1.1.4 Support the development of local housing strategies in the Greater Capital

Comments:

This section on housing concentrates only on land availability and a vague commitment to “prepare guidelines for local housing strategies.” No mention is made of the types of housing nor a commitment to investigate housing that can adapt to the changes in climate that are already occurring.

The ACT and Perth are already investigating alternative designs for Greenfield developments that incorporate mandatory renewable energy sources. There are even moves in a new development in Perth to create micro-grids with neighbourhood battery storage (ABC RN Ockham’s Razor 10/7/16). The ACT is sponsoring trials of smart meter / battery storage systems in new and older housing precincts.

The Dept of Planning should be committing to such trials and mandating much tougher standards for housing developments. Merely identifying housing sites is nowhere near good enough for a 21st century document.

DIRECTION 1.2 Improve cross-border transport connectivity

Comments:

This section is inadequate for the following reasons:

1. More than half the commuters that travel into the ACT from NSW do so from Queanbeyan, a “suburb” of Canberra where commuters often travel shorter distances to the CBD than most people from inside the ACT. The roads joining Queanbeyan to the ACT for which NSW are responsible are generally less than 5 km in length. We submit that there is little or no justification for expending any more effort than is necessary to maintain these roads.
2. There is little or no mention of public transport to the ACT via the Canberra-Sydney corridor and zero mention of the appalling train infrastructure that currently operates between the two most important capital cities in Australia – the Federal capital and the capital of NSW. It takes nearly 5 hours to travel by rail from Sydney to Canberra (3 hours by car), and almost 2 hours from Goulburn (one hour by car). This whole planning document relegates public transport to a very minor consideration. It almost seems as though the Department of Planning has waived a white flag when considering public transport infrastructure.
3. The overwhelming solutions proposed in this “Direction” are merely to do more studies and model building. There is little or no commitment to do anything about actually building infrastructure. This is a totally inadequate response to the needs of this region.
4. Other than *studying* the freight movements between NSW and ACT, no other proposal regarding the significant problem of increased road freight transport through the region is examined. This region bears a disproportionate burden of heavy vehicles transiting the region between Sydney and Melbourne, resulting in high levels of driver stress, continual damage to the Hume Highway that is being constantly repaired (because of the heavy vehicle loads), extended travel times between Sydney and the region, and high levels of pollution. There appears to be no attention in this document to moving freight off the Hume Highway and on to rail. Yet more studies on a problem that is already obvious is a

waste of resources and only delays further action that is needed immediately to alleviate the burden of road freight on current road infrastructure.

5. Direction 1.2 of the study assumes that only transport issues to do with cross border movements are important, yet by far the greatest movements of all forms of transport in the northern half of the region are to and from Sydney, of which only some journeys originate, end in, or transit through, the ACT. By far the busiest corridor is between Campbelltown and Yass, and between Campbelltown and Canberra. There are 18 rail services between Moss Vale and Campbelltown, yet only six between Goulburn and Campbelltown, and three between Campbelltown and Canberra. Cross border movements are relatively minor compared with other transport movements in the region.

SUBMISSIONS ON GOAL 1

Regarding transport, the NSW Government should prioritise:

1. Substantially improved travel times, timetables and comfort levels in the current rail service by *immediately* upgrading the current rail infrastructure (train sets and rail lines) between Sydney and Canberra.
2. Immediate planning for a High Speed Rail connection between Sydney and Canberra as the first stage of a Sydney to Melbourne HSR project. This should involve an immediate start on reserving a suitable corridor and setting in motion a comprehensive timetable to start building the first stage. This will necessitate a serious and substantial negotiation with both the local government councils through which the HSR will be built, with the Commonwealth Government, and with private developers and operators. There is no need for any further studies on this project as all issues have been previously canvassed in numerous studies. This is a matter of political will only. (see updated submission to the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan – Appendix A)
3. Moving freight off the roads and on to rail transport, both between Sydney and Melbourne, and into and out of Canberra.

Regarding Housing:

4. The NSW Government must implement more stringent incentives and disincentives to force councils to adopt more efficient energy policies, particularly in relation to street lighting, council owned building energy efficiencies, council energy purchase agreements, and council motor vehicle procurement policies.
5. The NSW Government must strengthen its BASIX requirements for new housing developments to include incentives and disincentives to developers to design and build more efficient housing developments. In particular, paying far more attention to energy efficiency, aspect and solar gain, insulation, and thermal mass.
6. The NSW Government implement more stringent regulations regarding water efficiency measures that councils must enforce in all new building developments, including but not limited to water recycling, grey water use in toilets and gardens, water harvesting from rooves, and water efficient showers and appliances.
7. The NSW Government implement mandatory sustainability requirements for the construction of new social housing builds.

Submission to the Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan

Part 3: Goal 2 – *Protect and enhance the region’s natural environment*

DIRECTION 2.1 Protect the region’s diverse environmental values

General comments:

We support the general thrust of this Direction and the actions the Government is proposing.

DIRECTION 2.3 Build the region’s resilience to natural hazards and climate change

General comments:

We support the general thrust of this Direction but believe that far more direction must be provided by the Government to both local councils and the community generally in relation to climate change disruption.

In addition to the NSW Government “supporting councils”, councils must be regulated more stridently in relation to their approach to adapting to and mitigating against climate change. Some local councils are recalcitrant and unresponsive to attempts to engage them in planning appropriately for the disruptions outlined in this section, and seem only willing to respond when forced to do so. Both incentives to act and disincentives in not acting are needed from the State government.

DIRECTION 2.5 Protect the region’s cultural heritage

General comments:

We support the general thrust of this Direction in relation to Aboriginal heritage. However, there is little attention paid to more recent cultural heritage in relation to white settlement. This area is one of the earliest European settled rural regions in Australia and there are whole areas of early urban settlement architecture that should be protected from demolition. In the Goulburn area there are numerous examples where the local Council has not been pro-active in preserving early settlement housing and commercial buildings.

Further, all buildings have embodied energy and the older a building the more the cost of this embodied energy has been amortized over its life. Demolishing older buildings to make way for new developments negates the embodied energy, contributing to further CO2 emissions, and destroys heritage.

SUBMISSIONS ON GOAL 2

The NSW Government must implement more stringent incentives and disincentives to require councils to take account of the embodied energy in current buildings before approving demolitions of otherwise safe and usable buildings.

Submission to the Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan

Part 4: **GOAL 3 – Strengthen the economic opportunities of the region**

DIRECTION 3.1 Support and promote the growth of the tourism industry

General comment:

Two significant tourist assets have not been referenced in Direction 3.1:

1. Eco Tourism. There is a significant potential for this form of tourism given the natural assets, including large national parks, a strong renewables sector (eg SERREE's renewables trail), and a large client market within 1- 3 hours travel time of the region.
2. Rail Trails. Anecdotal evidence is that people in Sydney and Canberra who wish to cycle on rail trails travel to Victoria or New Zealand to do so. Yet there are two remarkable rail trail corridors within the region that have not been developed – Canberra to Bombala and Goulburn to Crookwell. Despite strong community and academically researched support for the Goulburn – Crookwell rail trail, and lobbying from the relevant local councils and community groups, the NSW Government has either resisted attempts to develop this tourist asset, or failed to support the proposals adequately, citing numerous bureaucratic obstacles.

ACTION 3.1.1 Improve tourism related transport services

1. An efficient transport system is necessary so that the region remains a key tourist destination.

See Part 2: Goal ,1 on transport issues.

General Comment:

While “branding public transport services” is an important marketing exercise, as one of only three commitments from the NSW Government in this section, it has all the hallmarks of spin: appearance over substance. The same applies to “Raising awareness”.

By far the main issue is the appalling state of public transport in the region. Train services are inadequate (apart from serving the far north of the region), rail infrastructure is worn out and decrepit: rolling stock is at least 30 - 40 years old and the track alignment dates back to the 19th century.

While road transport has had extensive upgrading over the last 40 years, rail has seen little or no improvement. Until comfort and travel times can improve, no amount of branding or awareness raising will paper over the chasm that is public transport in this region. In fact, from a marketing perspective, it will be counter productive once the truth is discovered about the real state of public transport.

The public transport system is anything but efficient in enabling growth in tourism, regional connections, cross border connections, or for moving freight off the already stretched road network.

The only road public transport that links some parts of the region are privately owned bus / coach services, and these do not service many of the smaller centres in the area.

If the NSW government is serious about developing access to the region for tourism and reducing CO2 emissions, branding or awareness raising will not achieve the desired outcome with out significant investment in improving the services.

DIRECTION 3.2 Enhance the productivity of primary industries

General comment:

Agriculture is under threat from climate change, low prices, and the incursion of tree changers into the area. Farmers that can benefit from renting some of their land to renewable industries is one way agriculture can become less marginal for some. Benefit sharing for neighbours and communities in the vicinity of wind and solar farms can help alleviate the marginal nature of much agricultural activity in the region.

DIRECTION 3.3 Support the productivity and capacity of the region's mineral and energy resource lands

ACTION 3.3.1 Implement the NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan to increase renewable energy generation

General comments:

We strongly support the NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan and encourages the Dept Planning to give its highest priority to implementing the Action Plan's recommendations and projects.

Goal: "build community support for renewable energy"

See [Appendix B](#) for the CE4G submission on support for community energy. TGG thoroughly endorses that submission.

Goal: "attract and grow expertise in renewable energy technology"

General comment:

The NSW Government has placed too many obstacles in the path of wind farm development, retarding the growth in expertise. In contrast, the ACT Government has been pro-actively encouraging the development of renewable energy by its policies. This tardiness on the part of the NSW Government has placed NSW at the bottom of the list of states generating renewable energy when the Snowy Hydro is excluded.

In terms of attracting and growing expertise, the Snowy Scheme is a fully established renewable generator, so any increase in expertise must come from other forms of renewable energy.

The region is rich in wind and solar resources and this is the sector in which growth in expertise has the potential. With the right policies in place, this region could become a major driver in renewable expertise, industry and innovation.

Commitment from the NSW Government to supporting Community Energy in the region has been limited to funding feasibility studies. However, if the Department is serious in supporting Community Energy, it will have to provide material support in addition to mere fine words. Our experience in seeking grant seed funding has not proven successful, with the Government struggling to find suitable avenues in which to provide real and useful financial seed funding, without which our particular project will struggle to reach fruition.

The Region as a Renewable Cluster.

We believe that this region can become a major renewable industry cluster. No other region has such a range of renewable industries currently operating:

- Wind – highest concentration of wind farms in Australia
- Hydro – the Snowy Mountains scheme

- Bio-generation – the Woodlawn Veolia bio-generator using waste from Sydney
- Solar – a high solar radiation resource coupled with cheap land and ready access to the grid.

In addition, with high level education facilities at the ANU, UC, CSIRO and CIT readily accessible to the region, innovation and expertise can be exploited with the right policy settings in place. Goulburn has a currently underutilised TAFE that could also be expanded to accommodate renewable training.

ACTION 3.3.4 Plan for the ongoing productive use of mineral and energy resource lands

General Comment:

We believe that merely investigating “appropriate methods for encouraging best practice rehabilitation and visual impact management for mines” does not go nearly far enough to ensure that mining companies fulfill their obligations to rehabilitate a mining site once it has been exhausted. We believe that “encouraging” will not ensure proper rehabilitation and that the only way to ensure a return to a rehabilitated site is to legislate for heavy penalties to be imposed on non-compliance, and a guarantee deposit to the value of the cost of rehabilitation is paid prior to approval of any mining activity.

DIRECTION 3.4 Grow regional strategic assets to support economic growth across the region

General comment:

By far the most strategic asset desperately needed is a 21st century rail corridor utilizing a High Speed Rail between Sydney and Canberra as the first stage in a link to Melbourne. Such a project can start to deliver revenue that can support the next two stages: Canberra to Albury and Albury to Melbourne. See Appendix A

SUBMISSIONS ON GOAL 3

1. Rail Trail:

The NSW Government remove the obstacles to prevent the establishment of a rail trail between Crookwell and Goulburn and provide sufficient financial support to the two Local Councils and the Goulburn Rail Trail group to develop this resource.

2. Renewable energy expertise.

- I. The NSW Government move immediately to adopting the benefit sharing model currently under consideration.
- II. The NSW Government remove the 2 km restriction on locating wind turbines close to farm houses and other residences and adopt the Victorian model of 1 km.
- III. The NSW Government must decide how it can financially support the initial start up phase of Community Energy projects and provide seed funding to viable projects.

3. Renewable Energy Cluster:

The NSW Government expand the role of SERREE as part of the Renewable Energy Action Plan to include establishing a Renewable Energy Cluster in the region, centered in Goulburn, using the Goulburn TAFE campus as a centre of excellence in training.

4. High Speed Rail:

See Part 2: Goal 1 submission (2).

5. Mining site rehabilitation:

The NSW Government must mandate and collect a guarantee deposit equal to the cost of rehabilitating mining sites to ensure that end-of-life mines are rehabilitated appropriately.

Submission to the Draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan

Part 5: GOAL 4 – Build communities that are strong, healthy and well-connected

DIRECTION 4.5 Enhance community access to jobs, goods and services by improving connections

General comment

See Part 2 – Goal 1, Direction 1.2 Comments, and submission (2) High Speed Rail.

The Goulburn Group (TGG)

Submission to the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan

April 2012 – revised 7/16

The Goulburn Group (TGG).

The Goulburn Group (TGG) is a community action group based in Goulburn (NSW). Our Train Watch Committee has done some research into transport issues for the Southern Tablelands and Southern Highlands regions.

TGG believes that any state based transport plan must take into account two vital issues for the region:

1. The need for long term planning for High Speed Rail between Sydney and Melbourne, via Canberra.
2. The immediate need to upgrade the current rail services to the area.

The Goulburn area is well served by road infrastructure to Sydney and Canberra, but with Climate Change an increasing threat, public transport that focuses on lowering carbon emissions must be improved in order to reduce the use of these roads by both the public and by corporate users.

A. HIGH SPEED RAIL.

The most frequently advanced argument against HSR is that there is not a high enough population density to support it. TGG does not accept this argument, based on research into travel in the Sydney – Canberra – Melbourne corridor on a typical weekday in 2010.

On any Tuesday in 2010, there were approximately 20,000 seats "flying" - each way - in this corridor. Additionally, there were approximately 1000 coach seats and a similar number of rail seats travelling each way. There are an indeterminate number of car seats doing the same trips.

Naturally some of these seats are empty, but the costs involved in sending these seats are being met whether or not they are occupied. (Figures available on request)

This translates into approximately 250 aircraft movements into and out of Kingsford Smith Airport each day, about 20 coach trips, 10-15 train trips and an indeterminate number of car trips in the corridor.

There have been repeated calls for a second airport to be built in the Sydney basin. The cost of this infrastructure could be set against an HSR, reducing the effective cost of HSR by as much as \$15B, possibly more if such an airport also needs HSR into the CBD. The current capital costs of running enough aeroplanes within the corridor have been calculated by TGG at approximately \$3B.

With larger capacity international aircraft replacing smaller smaller units, and with the increasing uncertainty of fuel supplies due to peak oil, it is highly likely that aircraft movements in another 10 years will not far exceed current patterns.

Building HSR, therefore, provides a window of opportunity to both eliminate the need for a second airport and to provide the kind of infrastructure that can reduce carbon emissions, provide a long term solution to transport issues in this corridor, and satisfy consumer demand for a more user friendly way of travelling inside this corridor.

It would also provide a far better solution for intra-corridor travel for people in the intermediate settlements and thus build on the attempts by all levels of government to encourage people to move out of the major metropolitan areas to regional cities within the corridor.

The solution:

TGG does not assume that all air and coach transport movements would be eliminated by HSR, as has been effectively achieved in Taiwan following the introduction of the Taiwan HSR.

However, based on an 80% reduction in such use, this would equate to approximately 18,000 seats (excluding car use) available to a HSR operator, each way. Most HSR trains carry approximately 1000 seats.

This being so, there would be enough capacity to operate a train every 45 minutes between the hours of 6am and 11pm. In off peak times this could be reduced so as to provide a more frequent service in peak times.

Travel time between the Sydney and Melbourne CBD would be approximately 3 hours, and the cost of getting to and from the airport would be eliminated.

TGG believes that there is ample opportunity to have 5 or 6 intermediate stops and not adversely affect travel times, based on a study of the Taiwan HSR timetable. In peak times, through trains can pass all stops trains in stations to keep within these time frames.

If the Taiwan example is anything to go by, increased patronage within a short time would allow an even more frequent service, especially if there is a consequent inevitable growth in rural communities.

Finance.

The upper end of estimates to build a Sydney to Melbourne HSR is around \$40B. Assuming a conservative discount of \$10B to avoid building a second Sydney airport, the effective cost would be \$30B.

Amortizing this over a conservative life of only 40 years and a patronage of, say 20,000 per day, the capital cost per passenger would be approximately \$102. If a lower estimate of \$25B were the effective cost, the capital cost per passenger would be approximately \$85.

With average air fares of around \$130 – 230, plus a taxi to the CBD, a current cheap fare would leave little change from \$200 and a "normal" fare would cost up to \$300.

From a financial perspective, TGG does not think HSR would therefore cost the consumer any more than the current air fares and would add considerably to a passenger's comfort and convenience.

In revenue terms, the capital expenditure would produce an adequate return on investment compared to the return on investment on roads and airports currently obtained by the government.

Recommendations:

1. TGG therefore recommends that the State Government take immediate steps to negotiate with the Federal Government to commence planning HSR between Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. Purchase of easements for a corridor should commence immediately in order to keep costs within reasonable limits.
2. In order to create certainty for regional communities, corporations, business groups, and local government planners, this corridor should be announced within the next 12 months.
3. As most HSR takes up to 10 years to build, this process should begin immediately.

B. CURRENT RAIL SERVICES

Current Practice.

The current rail service between Goulburn and Sydney is grossly inadequate. Currently, all rail services are bedevilled by poor track conditions, with numerous speed restrictions due to poor rail "upgrades" that have manifestly failed to produce any time savings.

Poor timetabling, constantly slow running times that inevitably mean that country trains get stuck behind local metropolitan services, and inadequate track separation in metropolitan areas means that country services almost always run late.

Supervision of unruly passengers, especially, but not exclusively on City Rail trains, is inadequate and sporadic. Numerous accounts by our own members of assaults, intimidation, harassment, drunkenness, and general noise levels make travel unattractive to anyone able to use alternative means. Even our own local member of parliament has been harassed while travelling on the service.

Noise levels from mobile phones, computer games, and noisy and disruptive passengers makes business use of the services difficult if not impossible.

Poor rolling stock means that running noise levels are high, doors don't work properly (especially between the lobby end of each carriage and the seating compartment), and power units break down far too regularly. Toilets are regularly unusable because of vandalism or poor maintenance.

A poor staff culture that allows staff to perpetuate a "She'll be right" attitude towards customer care, customer service and tight on-time running means that customers inevitably appear to be regarded as a nuisance rather than a resource. The

exception to this is with most of the Country Link staff, who seem, most of the time, to have a more professional attitude.

Examples are numerous, but here is one: There have been many times when trains have been stuck 500 metres from Goulburn station waiting to get to the platform because a freight train is sitting on the platform waiting for staff to get the train moving.

Continuing to use a track alignment that is nearly 150 years old means that, until HSR is built, travelling times will be far too slow for many people. Reducing travel times to under 2.5 hours (Goulburn to Sydney) may relieve this shortcoming temporarily.

The results:

Inevitably, this means that the only people to use the services are pensioners of various categories, children, adolescents, and those not needing a reliable or speedy service. Business travel is almost impossible to organise due to the unreliability and unattractiveness of the services.

The sheer incompetence of Rail Corp, City Rail and the ARTC has meant that this region has been lumbered with a rail service that is not even comparable with most Third World rail systems.

For the capital city of the country to be joined to the country's largest City by an out-of-date, unreliable, uncomfortable, and unbelievably slow rail service is scandalous.

Compared with TGG members' experiences of train travel in Asia and Europe, local train travel is an embarrassing disgrace.

With fares so low, and services so bad, there are virtually no business travellers on any of the services beyond Bowral. Inevitably, revenue from travel on these services cannot possibly be covering anywhere near the cost of providing the service.

Temporary Solutions (in lieu of HSR)

TGG urges the State Government to place a high priority on the following:

1. Ensure that the track is in good condition so that there are no speed restrictions and that adequate resources are allocated to track maintenance.
2. In the case of ARTC, lobby the Federal Government to ensure this maintenance is carried out immediately or face loss of income due to poor performance, as is normal commercial practice.
3. Ensure that on all services, adequate, well resourced and trained personnel are allocated to *enforce* standards of behaviour by all passengers. (TGG members have witnessed half hearted efforts to constrain passenger behaviour that have produced very limited results.)
4. Ban all use of mobile phones, and computer games and movies without earphones, in the seating section of each carriage and provide signage that encourages all mobile phone users to only use the lobby ends of the carriages for mobile phone use.

5. Allocate a significant amount of capital to:
 - Upgrade and replace old rolling stock and power units that are unreliable.
 - Duplicate rail lines in metropolitan areas where country and freight trains are operating.
 - Prioritise country trains, not only in timetabling, but in operational circumstances where they are late arriving in metropolitan control areas.
 - Set aside at least half a carriage on both City Rail and Country Link services to be provided with 240 volt outlets and tables in each seat to facilitate business computer use.
 - Train staff, both station and in-train, in good customer relations and on-time running of trains

6. Re-configure timetables to better suit business travellers to and from the region, including:
 - Expanding the Canberra Explorer service out of Sydney to include Tuesday and Thursday evenings, and / or ...
 - Re-instating the later afternoon City Rail service that leaves closer to 5pm, in addition to the current 3.48 service and making it an express service that does not stop between Campbelltown and Mittagong.
 - Bringing forward the XPT evening service to Melbourne by about an hour
 - Reduce the travel time on all services. Our estimate is that all the services could make the Sydney to Goulburn trip in no more than 2.5 hours if the track was in good order and timetabling and prioritising were improved.

TGG believes that making these changes would add to the attractiveness of train travel to and from Sydney as a temporary measure while HSR was being built over the next 10 years.

Revision 2016 Sydney to Canberra statistics

Pax seats:

Published seat numbers:	
Aeroplanes: SYD – CBR (2010):	2606
Trains SYD – CBR (2016):	468
Coaches SYD – CBR (2016):	1300
 Total known seats:	 4374
Plus estimates:	
GBN-CBR – commuters:	1000
Other cars / tourists, etc:	1000
 Total estimated seats:	 6374

Sydney to Moss Vale statistics

Trains (MV – Campbelltown seats)	3000
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What is going on here?

- In Germany, 47% of the installed renewable energy capacity is owned by citizens and communities. Denmark has even greater community ownership.
- In the UK there are 436 Community Energy projects (2.4 / M population)
- In Australia there are, at most, 25 Community Energy projects (<1.1 / M population)ⁱ

Why is Australia so far behind the eight ball?

The simple answer is: government policy, support and assistance for community energy.

“...given the current market context, **government support is crucial** to first projects and early replication.” Institute for Sustainable Futures, UTS.ⁱⁱ

“There is around 66MW of community renewable electricity capacity installed, primarily funded through debt **and grant**, with over 200MW in development.”
UK Department of Energy and Climate Change.ⁱⁱⁱ

And just to make the point more relevant to government decision making bodies in Australia ...

“Community [energy] projects ... offer between 12-13 times as much community value re-invested back into local areas as would be achieved through 100% commercial models.”
UK Department of Energy and Climate Change.ⁱⁱⁱ

Community energy is at the crossroads. It's an infant industry in Australia, and many projects are trying to find their feet. Without government support that is more than just funding studies, the industry will struggle.

So why can't volunteers take up the slack?

Volunteers already put in enormous amounts of “in-kind” labour – as much as 20–30% of a community energy project cost.^{iv} This in-kind labour has its limits and must not become a substitute for government inaction. Burn out and disengagement are at risk when volunteers are asked to do too much, at which point the project will fail.

Governments cannot rely solely on volunteer labour to solve their policy issues.

Who is Community Energy for Goulburn (CE4G)?

CE4G is a community group that has recently conducted a feasibility study into a 1.2 Mw solar farm on the outskirts of Goulburn (NSW). The study was funded by a grant from the NSW Government through the Office of Environment and Heritage.

The study concluded that such a project was feasible and that there would be a return to community investors of approximately 5 – 6%, conditional upon certain factors outlined in the report. The projected cost of the project is approximately \$2.7M (excluding in-kind contributions), a maximum of which 30% is expected to be raised through finance. Community ownership of a minimum of 51% is mandated.

However, the study pointed out that for the project to proceed, approximately \$100,000 - \$130,000 would be needed to complete the Development phase prior to a public offering. This funding should, in our opinion come from government grants if the NSW government wants such community projects to succeed.

It has been volunteer labour that has made the study possible, and while the grant was the catalyst and enabler, it is impractical and onerous to rely solely on volunteers to resource the next crucial stage.

While all levels of government give lip service to community energy, actual policy and financial support is sadly lacking. Europe and the USA are moving ahead rapidly with community renewable energy, but Australian governments have been sadly dragging their feet when it comes to real, concrete financial support.

While funding feasibility studies by volunteers is a good start, unless projects can get beyond being merely feasible, it is wasted money.

Second and subsequent stages.

CE4G have another two stages planned, including an energy plant for the Goulburn Jail. Initial discussions have already proved positive. A third project involves providing a means by which disadvantaged people in the region can access renewable energy.

However, as outlined in the UTS publication, the first stage is always the most costly at the project development stage. Subsequent stages are always less costly because much of the initial work associated with the Development stage is replicable for projects that follow the first project.

What sources of funding are available?

Arena

CE4G has unsuccessfully sought funding from Arena directly, and indirectly through SERREE. Arena's own website touts its commitment to Community Energy, but its criteria are so onerous that projects such as CE4G's have little chance of success^v. Additionally, the application process itself is very demanding for a volunteer community group. Simply completing the application process has been costed by a consultant at \$15,000 or more, for a \$100K grant!

Goulburn Mulwaree Council.

CE4G sought relief from GMC to waive or defer the DA fee. This was rejected, despite the fact that the DA has been completed as part of the initial study. While GMC also affirms its "in principle" support, actual funding for the next stage has not materialised.

Local investors

As indicated in the feasibility study, the Development Stage carries more risk than the Construction and Operations stages. CE4G does not consider it a safe strategy to make a public offer for this more risky stage. If this stage can be completed, it will be far easier to attract investors once the project has a firm base from which to launch.

Conclusion

Unless all levels of government can assist community energy projects to fund the high risk Development stage, many of these projects, including CE4G's project, will struggle and may fail.

ⁱ All three figures: The Conversation, June 18, 2015 6.20am AEST, quoting UTS / Arena: Langham, E., Ison, N. and Madden, B. (2015) Community Energy Cost Analysis and Cost Reduction Potential (An Appendix of the National Community Energy Strategy). Prepared by the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney.

ⁱⁱ Langham, E., Ison, N. and Madden, B. (2015) Community Energy Cost Analysis and Cost Reduction Potential (An Appendix of the National Community Energy Strategy). Prepared by the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney.

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/274746/20140108_Community_Energy_Modelling_FinalReportJan.pdf

^{iv} Langham, E., Ison, N. and Madden, B. (2015) Community Energy Cost Analysis and Cost Reduction Potential (An Appendix of the National Community Energy Strategy). Prepared by the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney.

^v <http://arena.gov.au/funding/investment-focus-areas/community-energy/>

Appendix C

	Support	Study / Review / Identify	Act	Delegate/ Partner	
Goal 1					
1.1.1	1				
1.1.2		1			
1.1.3.	1				
1.1.4.	1	2	1		
1.2.1		1	2		
1.2.2.		2			
Total Goal 1	3	6	3	0	
Goal 2					
2.1.1.	1		1	1	
2.1.2.	1	1		1	
2.1.3.	2				
2.2.1	1				
2.2.2.	1				
2.2.3.			1	1	
2.2.4.		1			
2.2.5.		1	2		
2.3				1	
2.3.1.		1	2	1	
2.3.2.	3				
2.4.1		1			
2.4.2	1				
2.5.1.	1			1	
Total Goal 2	11	5	6	6	
Goal 3					
3.1.1.			3		
3.1.2.			1		
3.2.1.		2			
3.2.2.				1	
3.3.1.			1		
3.3.2.		2		1	
3.3.3.	2				
3.3.4.	1				
3.3.5.	1	3			
3.4.1			1		
3.4.2.			1		
3.5.1.		1			
Total Goal 3	4	8	7	2	
Goal 4					
4.1.1.		2		1	
4.1.2.				1	
4.2.1.		1	1		
4.2.2.	2	1			
4.3.1.	1				
4.4.1.				1	
4.5.1.			1	1	
4.5.2.		1			
4.5.3.		1			
Total Goal 4	3	6	2	4	
Grand Total	21	25	18	12	76
%	28	33	24	16	100