



19 October 2022

Chief Commissioner
Greater Cities Commission
PO Box 257
Parramatta NSW 2124

Via online submission

Dear Chief Commissioner,

The Six Cities Region Discussion Paper

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Six Cities Region Discussion Paper. RDA Illawarra congratulates the Greater Cities Commission on a comprehensive and aspirational vision for the regions involved.

RDA Illawarra has made several observations in the attached submission, but overall is fully supportive of the proposed strategic direction to deliver global competitiveness and local liveability.

The Six Cities Region strategy aligns well with the 2020 Illawarra-Shoalhaven City Deal Prospectus and its successor, the recently launched 2022 Illawarra-Shoalhaven Greater Cities Partnership Prospectus. Whilst coordinated by RDA Illawarra, these have been developed in collaboration with local councils and industry peak bodies; giving true 'grass roots' support to the initiatives included. Many of those initiatives support the direction of the Six Cities Region Discussion Paper and will provide a sound foundation for inclusion in the revised Illawarra-Shoalhaven Regional Plan.

The key observations of the attached submission are: -

1. Improved east-west road and rail connectivity is a matter that requires urgent attention and funding
2. Preservation of industrial lands and connecting transit corridors is a matter of urgency. A lack of holistic planning has resulted in residential and *ad hoc* commercial developments encroaching on industrial lands and transit corridors, which will ultimately prevent their 'highest and best' use
3. The '30-minute city' is a current research project for RDA Illawarra and can be progressed to implementation with a relatively small amount of funding, in collaboration with Transport for NSW. Its realisation will have significant liveability and productivity benefits for the region
4. The issue of housing (and rental) affordability is a major one for the Illawarra region. Recent research by RDA Illawarra indicates that internal migrants are avoiding the region due to high prices and low availability – a situation that must be addressed if we are to attract and retain key workers
5. RDA Illawarra feels that some mention should be made of the strong possibility of a Defence base being located at Port Kembla (or Newcastle) – given they are two of the three locations (the other being Brisbane) currently under consideration for and East Coast Naval Base. This Federal government decision would have a significant impact on the Six Cities region and require the acceleration of plans for housing, connectivity, infrastructure, jobs and planning

6. RDA Illawarra feels that the circular economy target could be more ambitious and include circular economy design for the entire Six Cities region – not just in its innovation districts
7. In addition to Joint Organisations, the Regional Development Australia (RDA) network has considerable local knowledge and has been a powerful collaborator and driver of regional issues in the Six Cities regions. RDA Illawarra recommends inclusion of the RDA network as a key stakeholder in the overall governance and delivery framework, along with Joint Organisations and other key stakeholders.

We look forward to reading the final Six Cities Region Vision document.

Yours sincerely



Debra Murphy
CEO
RDA Illawarra



An Australian Government Initiative



Submission to the Greater Cities Commission

The Six Cities Region Discussion Paper

Submitted by RDA – Illawarra

October 2022

Discussion Paper section	Page No.	Comments	Suggested amendment (Optional)
Introduction <i>From a Metropolis...</i>	13	Map indicates that Wollongong has two Universities	Amend Key to the map to read ‘University Campus’ rather than ‘University’.
<i>Our Assets & Strengths</i>		No comments	
The Vision <i>Overview</i>	22	RDA Illawarra notes that the targets for connectivity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 90 minutes between centres ▶ 30 minutes from home to job ▶ 15 minute walk to daily needs ▶ 100% digital connectivity align with those included in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Greater Cities Partnership Prospectus, which specifically targets the ‘30-Minute City’ as a project that requires funding and would have immediate benefits for liveability and productivity in the region.	
	24	Para 1 names parties that have contributed to planning, but excludes other stakeholders	Include ‘other stakeholders’ as “...local government, industry and other stakeholders.”
	27	‘Six Region Shapers’ are well-considered and provide a foundation for strategic development.	
1) <i>An Embedded First Nations Voice</i>	28	RDA Illawarra supports the inclusion of First Nations people in the development of the Region and City	

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		Plans, through the establishment of a First Nations Advisory Panel.	
2) A Connected Six Cities Region	31	<p>RDA Illawarra fully supports the connection of the regions through improved north-south and east-west road, rail and freight systems.</p> <p>This aligns with the content of the 2020 Illawarra Shoalhaven City Deal Prospectus, and its successor the recently launched Illawarra Shoalhaven Greater Cities Partnership.</p> <p>Both those documents request funding for the duplication of Picton Rd and the development of a business case for a direct east-west rail link (South-West Illawarra Rail Link – SWIRL).</p> <p>Delivery of these projects will improve direct passenger and freight access from Illawarra-Shoalhaven to Western Sydney and alleviate congestion on existing north-south road and rail networks, which are nearing capacity and whose failure would cause significant interruption to distribution of steel (from BlueScope) and other key products from the Illawarra-Shoalhaven region.</p>	
	31	For the past decade RDA Illawarra has advocated for the retention of industrial lands and connecting corridors. Unfortunately, the situation in the Illawarra is now becoming critical, with residential growth encroaching on industrial lands and transit corridors	A sense of urgency regarding preservation of industrial lands and transit corridors needs to be included in the narrative.

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		<p>and <i>ad hoc</i> industrial development quarantining key industrial land – especially around Port Kembla, Kembla Grange and at Wilton.</p> <p>In February 2022, RDA Illawarra wrote to the GSC and made the following two points (among others):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any protection of industrial lands considered by the GSC should extend to the Illawarra region as part of the Six-Cities of Greater Sydney [i.e. there should be a consistent approach] 2. The retention and protection of industrial lands and freight/commuter corridors be considered an important priority for the GSC, as it continues to broker engagement with Transport for NSW. 	
	32	<p>Digital access remains a key issue for the Illawarra-Shoalhaven region. Whilst the Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) for Wollongong (at 72.0) is above the national average of 71.1, the other regional areas are less well-served by digital connections, and are all below the Australian average:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Shellharbour – 68.0 ▶ Kiama – 68.0 ▶ Shoalhaven – 62.0 	
	33	<p>RDA Illawarra fully supports the proposed improvements in road and rail connectivity, especially the “development of a new rail connection to Western Sydney [which is] a crucial link that would support</p>	<p>Land and transit corridors need to be preserved now for this to be achieved.</p>

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		additional rail freight capacity in and out of Port Kembla and the Illawarra Shoalhaven city.”	
	34	RDA Illawarra supports the notion of a fast rail network but acknowledges the topography of the region, and environmental constraints, make its construction problematic. A suitable route will need to be mapped, or considerable expense incurred on an engineered solution.	
	36	RDA Illawarra fully supports the proposed improvements in public transport. The concept of a 30-Minute City is included in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Greater Cities Partnership Prospectus, which specifically targets this project for funding as its implementation would have immediate benefits for liveability and productivity in the region.	
3) <i>Housing Supply, diversity and affordability</i>	39	<p>RDA Illawarra fully supports proposed improvements that will increase the supply of housing – and housing options – for skilled, essential and lower-paid workers as well as the provision of sufficient social housing.</p> <p>RDA Illawarra proposes that there is a need for release of additional land for housing and changes to local planning regulations that will permit more medium-density housing as well as conversion of existing single-occupancy homes into multi-use dwellings. This will allow the character of the area to be retained, whilst</p>	

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		providing additional housing in areas that are already well-serviced.	
	42	RDA Illawarra recommends the inclusion of Superannuation Funds in the list of stakeholders	Amend item 3.2 to specifically include Superannuation Funds as a key stakeholder.
4) <i>Inclusive places linked to infrastructure</i>	47	RDA Illawarra recommends acceptance of the shift in activity from central business districts to local strategic centres. Since the early days of COVID-related lockdowns, RDA Illawarra has had the opinion that working-from-home, or remotely, would become entrenched for a significant proportion of the workforce, and that local councils needed to be planning accordingly.	
	48	Active Transport – along with public transport - must become a preferred choice for commuters and travellers. The Illawarra-Shoalhaven Greater Cities Partnership Prospectus '30-Minute City' project incorporates research regarding active transport (and its link with the public transport network) that will complement work underway by Transport for NSW.	
5) <i>Powering local jobs and economies</i>	51	Right hand column, para 2 has 'agriculture' and 'tourism' duplicated as focus industries.	Delete 'agriculture and tourism' from end of sentence.
	52	RDA Illawarra feels that the Illawarra-Shoalhaven region has innovative strengths in sustainable energy	Include in the existing narrative.

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		(offshore wind, hydrogen), defence and advanced manufacturing (HMAS Albatross, Bisalloy) and tourism. The Illawarra-Shoalhaven Greater Cities Partnership Prospectus includes these specialisations as the basis of precincts within the region and has one initiative specifically targeted at marine tourism (the ‘Blue Highway’).	
	53	RDA Illawarra feels that some mention should be made of the strong possibility of a Defence base being located at Port Kembla (or Newcastle) – given they are two of the three locations (the other being Brisbane) currently under consideration for an East Coast Naval Base. This Federal government decision would have a significant impact on the Six Cities region and require the acceleration of plans for housing, connectivity, infrastructure, jobs and planning.	Include reference to the possibility of a naval base at either Newcastle or Port Kembla and the impact that could have on the Six Region Shapers.
	55	Industrial Land preservation and planning are key issues for the Illawarra-Shoalhaven. RDA Illawarra would welcome a consistent approach to this issue that will provide certainty for local communities and investors.	
6) Climate-resilient green cities	58	RDA Illawarra acknowledges that – beyond electric vehicles – the Discussion Paper is technology agnostic,	

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		and that “zero-emission vehicles” could include hydrogen-fuelled vehicles.	
	59	RDA Illawarra feels that the target under item 6.3. could be more ambitious and include circular economy design for the entire Six Cities region – not just in its innovation districts.	Amend item 6.3 to include circular economy design for the entire Six Cities region.
	61 & 62	RDA Illawarra feels that greater use can be made of recycled wastewater (including blackwater from toilets), and that this needs to have better community acceptance, as it does in many European and Asian cities.	Specify what is included in ‘wastewater’ and included a specific target for its use in the targets on page 62
<i>Bringing together six cities – the next steps</i>	66	In addition to Joint Organisations, the Regional Development Australia (RDA) network has considerable local knowledge and has been a powerful collaborator and driver of regional issues in the Six Cities regions.	Include Regional Development Australia (RDA) network as a key stakeholder in the overall governance and delivery framework, along with Joint Organisations.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report or submission do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Government.

RDA Illawarra has prepared this submission. To the best of our knowledge, the information contained herein is neither false nor misleading and the contents are based on information and facts that were correct at the time of writing. RDA Illawarra accepts no responsibility or liability for any errors, omissions or resultant consequences including any loss or damage arising from reliance on information in this document.