

3 March 2023

BUSINESS ILLAWARRA WELCOMES RAIL PLAN COMMITMENT

The region's peak business organisation, Business Illawarra, has today welcomed a commitment from NSW Labor to support its call for a \$10 million rail connectivity plan for the Illawarra as a historic win, following its long-running campaign for enhanced freight and passenger links between the region and greater Sydney.

Business Illawarra Executive Director Adam Zarth said that the win would be welcomed by many across the region as recognition of the long-standing rail issues faced by Illawarra businesses and commuters alike, and importantly as a commitment from NSW Labor to get on with addressing them in the next term of government.

"I want to thank our local MPs Paul Scully, Ryan Park and Anna Watson for advocating strongly for better rail and working alongside us for a very long time in order to secure this important commitment."

"It's now beholden on us to secure an equivalent commitment from the NSW Coalition, to whom we have also been advocating, to put this important economic measure beyond doubt at the forthcoming state election."

"This commitment to a properly funded rail plan means we might finally see the kind of action on this long-standing issue that we have been advocating for over many years. The plan should deliver us a roadmap for future investments in better rail that will be essential to support our existing industries that employ so many locals, as well as growth of many emerging industries that are coming our way."

While there is no current plan to address the Illawarra's rail constraints, research commissioned by Business Illawarra has found that even without major weather events, freight rail constraints will cost our economy \$230 million annually by 2041.

The call for a rail connectivity plan is priority one in Business Illawarra's [state election platform](#), and includes consideration of a South West Illawarra Rail Link to connect the region to the booming economy of Western Sydney and its aerotropolis.

Business Illawarra, formerly the Illawarra Business Chamber, has been advocating for a new rail link between the Illawarra and Sydney on economic grounds since [construction of the Maldon-Dombarton Railway Line was suspended](#) in 1988.

This advocacy is supported by two major research reports undertaken with SMART Infrastructure Facility at the University of Wollongong, in [2017](#) and again in [2020](#), which provide a compelling economic case for delivery of a South West Illawarra Rail Link utilising the existing Maldon-Dombarton rail corridor.

Recent storms saw the closure of the South Coast and Illawarra and the Moss Vale-Unanderra lines, causing major disruption to both freight and passenger rail movements. At that time, [Business Illawarra joined with key impacted freight and manufacturing enterprises](#) BlueScope, NSW Ports, Cement Australia, GrainCorp and the Manildra Group to call for a funded plan so that the NSW Government can finally commence necessary work to better connect the region.

Media Contact – Adam Zarth 0404 146 829

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Links to Illawarra First directed research on rail connectivity, conducted by the University of Wollongong SMART Infrastructure Facility:

- [Assessing the Impacts of Better Connecting the Illawarra, 2020](#)
- [Upgrading Rail Connectivity Between the Illawarra and Greater Sydney, 2017](#)

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.