



**Sharon Bird MP
Federal Member for Cunningham**

NEWS RELEASE

Time for Howard Government to put money into Wollongong freight transport infrastructure

Federal Member for Cunningham, Sharon Bird, today said the Howard Government had been a sleep at the wheel for 5-years by ignoring Wollongong's land transport needs under the AusLink programme, and renewed her 2-year campaign for completion of the Maldon-Dombarton rail link.

Ms Bird was commenting after the release today of the Sydney-Wollongong corridor strategy.

Ms Bird said the report confirmed that total quantity of freight moving between Sydney and Wollongong would increase by nearly 4-percent every year to more than 27 million tonnes by 2025.

"Not only will Wollongong have the biggest commuter corridor in Australia, but these estimates confirm that freight tonnage between Sydney and Wollongong will be the highest of all intercity links on the Auslink National Network", she said.

Ms Bird said the report contained favourable comments on the completion of the Maldon-Dombarton line.

"I am very pleased that the report recognises the need and potential of a completed Maldon-Dombarton rail link contributing to easing current competition between commuter and freight movement.

"I have been lobbying hard for the last 2-years to have the Maldon-Dombarton line completion re-activated and I am very pleased that this report has recognised that my view is valid", she said.

Ms Bird said that Wollongong had been locked out of AusLink's \$12 billion programme for the last 5-years and this neglect by the Howard Government was simply inexcusable.

"It is now time for the Howard Government to put its money where its report is.

"It is now time for the Howard Government to treat land infrastructure transport in Wollongong fairly under the next round of AusLink starting in 2008-09.

"This report confirms that freight tonnage movement between Sydney and Wollongong will be massive.

"Wollongong will be making a major contribution to moving cargo - bulk and general - from ships to the consumers of Sydney and western Sydney.

"It is time Wollongong gets its fair share of AusLink funding", Ms Bird said.

Ms Bird said the 23-page Sydney-Wollongong corridor strategy was available on the Department of Transport and Regional Services website, or by contacting her office.

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