



NEWS RELEASE

Sharon Bird MP
Federal Member for Cunningham

Wollongong Infrastructure

Federal Member for Cunningham, Sharon Bird, last night told Federal Parliament that Wollongong's transport infrastructure needed to be prioritised to meet a number of key objectives, including linking Wollongong to western-Sydney.

Ms Bird outlined the objectives as including:

- reducing congestion
- adding to productivity
- adding to business and job opportunities
- maintaining crucial freight links with Sydney and
- developing a close link to western and south-western Sydney.

Ms Bird has been briefed by the *Illawarra Business Chamber* (IBC) on a proposed task force to be established shortly to work on Wollongong and the Illawarra's transport infrastructure needs.

“My message...over recent months has been that it is essential to do the hard work of developing the case for transport infrastructure investment for the region.

“That means fully developed arguments with comprehensive data in support for the region's claims for government funding and investment”, Ms Bird said.

She said that the Commonwealth Government had announced in the 2008-09 Budget the establishment of *Infrastructure Australia*, a \$20 billion *Building Australia Fund* and a *Major Cities Unit* in the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

Ms Bird told Federal Parliament that if projects in the region required Commonwealth Government involvement, the co-ordinating agency would be *Regional Development Australia –Illawarra* (formerly the Illawarra Area Consultative Committee).

She also criticised the ‘wish list’ approach of some Wollongong stakeholders on infrastructure projects.

“The business community in Wollongong would never invest money into any project on the basis of a smartly worded press release, so why should they expect the government to do likewise.

“It is time for all stakeholders – business, unions and community groups – to work together...”, Ms Bird said.

She said that a number of trends would place pressure on Wollongong’s existing transport infrastructure, including the growth of the Port of Port Kembla, the large 19,000 commuter Wollongong-Sydney corridor and the 5,000 ‘counter-commuter’ corridor from Sydney to Wollongong.

24 June 2008

Attachment: PDF of Hansard 23 June 2008, pages 118-120, *Grievance Debate* has been emailed to media.