



VICTORIAN BRANCH

**SUBMISSION ON THE EDDINGTON
EAST-WEST LINK
NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY**

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Executive Summary

The Australian Workers' Union (AWU) has been a strong and proud provider of construction services to the recently completed and opened \$2.5 billion EastLink project.¹ EastLink - Australia's newest toll-way, connecting the Monash, Eastern and Frankston Freeways - has set the standard for what Melbournians in future will come to expect of new infrastructure provision in their city. EastLink was completed ahead of time and under budget and was fatality free. However, the EastLink project cannot be considered fully completed until the East-West tunnel has been built.

The AWU therefore has a strong interest in the recommendations contained in Sir Rod Eddington's East West Link Needs Assessment (EWLNA). The AWU provided an initial submission to the Review and is pleased to acknowledge that the AWU's main recommendations - including road and rail tunnels and the importance of an integrated transport network including public transport provision - have been adopted in the EWLNA Recommendations. This report represents an important milestone in longer term planning for transport infrastructure in Melbourne which will help to secure future prosperity for the city, state and nation.

The AWU urges every level of government – local, state and federal – to work collaboratively to implement the Eddington recommendations as an integrated package. The recommendations hold the key to unlocking an economic, social and environmental dividend but only if Melbourne's transport challenges are addressed swiftly and effectively. The world does not stand still. Without action now, the benefits which the Recommendations infer could be lost.

Melbourne's status as the fastest growing City in Australia is no coincidence. Responsible stewardship by the Bracks and Brumby Governments has ensured that Melbourne and Victoria have thrived. The EWLNA Recommendations provide a roadmap for the future, which builds on Victorian Government initiatives and which links up with national Auslink funding and programs. It is vital that the Victorian Government is supported by the Rudd Labor Government to ensure that the nation continues to prosper.

Introduction

The future prosperity of Melbourne is directly linked to the efficient and effective provision of transport infrastructure. The long lead times involved in planning, funding, and constructing infrastructure is a serious challenge to governments which face short term challenges day to day. The advice of Sir Rod Eddington's team is therefore a strategic opportunity for the Government to take stock of progress and plan ahead for the next stages of Melbourne's transport infrastructure.

The EWLNA comes at a critical time in the city's development. It offers scope to embrace challenges with an integrated plan of action and a clearly articulated set of justifications for undertaking all the recommendations contained in the report. The AWU supports the Recommendations as an integrated package. We do not support cherry picking some projects over others. Rather, we believe that to address the road, rail, freight and cycling challenges, an integrated network approach is required.

This submission draws attention to Recommendations of particular importance to the AWU but in so doing, the AWU also supports all the recommendations contained in the Report. The most important take away from Sir Rod's Report is simply to avoid delay and make a start.

EastLink will pave the way for the standard which Melbournians will come to expect in new infrastructure provision. The EastLink Environment and the EastLink Trail are key additions to the project which adds amenity, accessibility and choice for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians..²

And the AWU has a particular interest in the EastLink tunnels because they were built by our members. EastLink's two tunnels - under the Mullum Mullum Valley (eastbound and westbound) connecting the Eastern Freeway extension past Springvale Rd with EastLink at Ringwood - are each 1.6 kms long, contain three lanes and are located up to 53 metres from surface level. These exceptional facilities give confidence in the ability of delivering the challenging tunneling projects which form part of the rail and road solutions contained in the EWLNA.³

The Challenge for Policy

Melbourne is a city of 3.7 million people and is the fastest growing city in Australia. Melbourne's growth of 61,700 people was the largest of all the Australian capital cities in 2006-07 according to ABS data.⁴ The population growth in Melbourne in 2006-07 equated to an average increase of over 1,100 people per week, compared with Sydney increasing by around 1,000 per week. The strongest growth is occurring in the city's north and west. By 2031, at least 4.5 million people are expected to be living in Melbourne. Recent strong population growth suggests that Melbourne may reach this figure well ahead of 2031, possibly as early as 2020.

The fact is there will be more cars on our roads; more people on public transport; and more goods being moved. And more traffic means more congestion. We need to ensure that the necessary investment in infrastructure and services are made to facilitate future growth and

development in order for Melbourne to retain its edge as an attractive destination for people and investment and with its local jobs and living standards.

At present, there are significant bottlenecks in the road and rail networks that affect journeys from the West to the East, including the limited number of road crossings of the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers and congestion on the rail network at North Melbourne. These constraints will limit the capacity of both networks to cope with the high growth in demand for cross city travel that will occur over the next 25 years:

There is much that needs to be done in order to meet these challenges. Managing rapid growth presents the city with some tough challenges and difficult choices.

Plans articulated in the EWLNA are on the right track to building an integrated transport network. They build on the Victorian Government's commitments contained in Meeting our Transport Challenges and the more than \$10.5 billion over 10 years which is being spent on transport projects.⁵

Great progress has been made in planning, investing and extending Melbourne's transport network in the east of the City and the Mornington Peninsula. And the needs of the fast growing centres such as Casey will be served exceptionally by EastLink including the Frankston, Ringwood and Dandenong growth corridor.⁶

The challenges in the west

Confronting planners is the sustained pace with which the regions of Melton, Wyndham and beyond have been growing (in addition to central Melbourne) which today is matching and overtaking the strong growth to the City's east. Together, Wyndham, Casey and Melton were in the top 10 LGAs in Australia in terms of population growth ranking 4th, 5th and 9th, respectively.⁷ Growth is outstripping previous projections. Access to work and services is via the inner west. The inner west is the corridor to the western region of Victoria.

The Melbourne - Geelong conurbation is extending Melbourne's growth linking industry to port facilities and people with better amenities and the natural environment. The need for access to and from the West is undeniable. It is critical that Victoria make the investments today in order to harness this growth in a sustainable way that delivers greater prosperity to all Victorians in the future.

Therefore, in assessing the recommendations contained in the EWLNA report, it is vital that we recognize the critical transport and infrastructure needs of the West (in addition to the East) in order to both sustain and build upon the extraordinary growth which has been taking place across Melbourne. The growth of population and employment in metropolitan Melbourne in the next 20 years will continue to drive large increases in personal and freight/commercial travel.

The EWLNA report has made an assessment of the above trends and made a number of projections for growth in transport demand out to 2031.⁸ The sheer scale of this demand puts into perspective the various options proposed for investing in the network considered in the report.

The Westgate Bridge...

The AWU notes the significant Victorian and Federal Government investment in strengthening and improving access to the Westgate Bridge and widening the Corridor.⁹ It is also true that Melbourne cannot afford to continue its over-reliance on the West Gate Bridge and West Gate Corridor. At present, the city's transport network is highly vulnerable to constraints and disruptions. The bridge was built to handle 40,000 vehicles a day and now handles nearly 160,000 vehicles every day and is forecast to grow to 235,000 vehicles per day in 2031. Growing congestion on the bridge during peak periods is also having negative economic and business impacts. There is a need for an alternative to the bridge.

Need for local jobs...

The EWLNA Report makes the point that despite the very strong growth in the city's west and north there is no corresponding improvement forecast for job catchments. In fact, Werribee – located in one of the city's major growth areas – looks set to experience a significant decline in the number of jobs located within a 30 minute drive by 2011. New transport connections have the potential to significantly improve accessibility in the west, particularly in centres such as Footscray, Werribee, Sunshine and Geelong. This will help to boost local employment in the services sector – an area where the west has fallen behind the eastern suburbs and the central city. This will have benefits for the entire Melbourne economy.

Melbourne's western suburbs face major challenges in supporting strong population growth with efficient transport infrastructure. Growth in local jobs is not matching population growth. Many residents travel further for work – placing increasing pressure on the limited routes available to travel from the west to the central city and across town. Doing nothing to improve connections to and from the west will constrain investment, business and employment opportunities in the city's western suburbs. In turn, this will have a negative, flow-on effect on the entire city economy.

Logistics City...

Melbourne's position as Australia's freight and logistics capital will be strengthened by the consideration of a new Logistics City in the economic heart of Victoria's western metropolitan region. Melbourne's west was already a strong generator of jobs and economic growth and was located at the centre of Victoria's air, sea, rail and road links. In making the announcement of the government's interest in the Logistics City concept, as the Premier noted almost 65,000 new jobs have been created in the western metropolitan region since we were elected and the area employs more than 300,000 people.¹⁰

Convenient and reliable access to our freeway and rail networks and the Port of Melbourne means the west is the ideal location for a Logistics City which would target new high tech industries and high value employment opportunities. A Logistics City would target hi-tech industries of health, pharmaceuticals and aerospace alongside traditional goods such as produce and automotive parts. The investment in a Logistics City would generate jobs in education and training, financial and information technology services and logistics roles in packing, handling, delivery and customs. Victoria has a strong record of traditional manufacturing but as we move forward hi-tech industries are growing as is consumer demand for just-in-time products."

a) Road tunnel

While the Monash-CityLink-West Gate freeway upgrade will relieve pressure along this corridor, the extra capacity being provided on the route will be fully taken up during peak periods within a relatively short time.¹¹ Levels of traffic congestion are also increasing substantially along key east-west arterial routes, such as Footscray Road, Dynon Road, Geelong Road, Racecourse Road and Bell Street.

The new road link recommended by the EWLNA will create a direct, connected east-west route across the city for around 150,000 vehicles each day. It will provide an additional high capacity river crossing and an alternative to the M1. It will eliminate 'choke points' in the cross city road network, improving travel reliability and reducing the incentive for 'rat running'. The link will also provide much improved connections for freight transport to Melbourne Airport and the Port of Melbourne.

Demand for cross-town movements is likely to be significantly greater from west to east than in the other direction. In particular, the growth in demand for travel across the Maribyrnong River by both rail and road will overwhelm existing infrastructure, leading to significant peak-spreading and an inability to make trips when they are needed. The road tunnel has the opportunity of linking the growth in the west to the growth in the east. That will have an important multiplier effect in terms of options and choices for residents on both sides of the city. Greater access and connectivity brings more local jobs and investment.

The Eastern Freeway is the last of the 'unconnected' freeways leading towards the city. The construction of CityLink – which joined the Monash, West Gate and Tullamarine Freeways – effectively provides a southern and western bypass of the inner city, directing tens of thousands of vehicles each day onto a high standard road away from less suitable city streets. Linking the eastern freeway completes the northern and eastern access to the network.

The EastLink project could not be considered fully completed until the East-West tunnel had been built. Without the East-West tunnel, the Eastern Freeway will turn into a congested car park and will defeat the purpose of EastLink.. We call on the State Government to adopt the Eddington report, and use the EastLink model of private public partnership to build the tunnel.

Amenity at ground level above the proposed tunnel will also improve and the Report identifies a range of benefits from dedicated public transport and bicycle lanes along currently congested through ways such as Alexandra Avenue and Victoria Parade.

Progress with more fuel efficient and electric vehicles will be ongoing. Trends in this direction should be encouraged aimed at improving the numbers of low emission or 'clean' vehicles operating in Melbourne.

b) Rail tunnel

Given Melbourne's strong population growth, the important policy goal of boosting public transport patronage needs to be facilitated by lifting capacity limitations on the existing rail network. In particular, the running of express trains limits the number of services that can be

provided on each line. The Melbourne Metro rail tunnel recommended by the EWLNA will provide capacity for an extra 40,000 passengers per hour and ensure that the Northern and Caulfield Rail Groups have sufficient capacity in the future.

Linking up the fastest growing regions in the west with the south-east via the rail tunnel will ease congestion across the whole network. The rail tunnel will take the first step towards building a metro-style network for Melbourne by 'unscrambling' the inner core of the network and laying down the foundation for further extensions of the network into growing areas in the West.

The Tarneit link (Sunshine to Werribee) would end conflict between Geelong regional trains and Werribee suburban trains by running V/Line services on a new alignment through the growth areas of Tarneit and Derrimut. This would deliver very substantial benefits across the entire rail network, including providing residents in new growth areas with a high standard rail link, improving reliability for regional commuters from Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo and allowing for a significant increase in suburban services on the Werribee line.

Conclusion

As Sir Rod notes, major transport infrastructure projects are both expensive and disruptive, but cities with inadequate transport networks pay a high economic and social cost.¹²

Policymakers have long recognised that transport plays an important role in the economy, and modern economies spend substantial sums on investing, maintaining and managing their transport networks.¹³

A good transport network is important in sustaining economic success in modern economies: the transport system links people to jobs; delivers products to markets; underpins supply chains and logistics networks; and is the lifeblood of domestic and international trade. Firms and households move to locations that offer better access to skilled workers, customers, goods and services. Without improved access that better infrastructure brings, they will not.

The AWU congratulates Sir Rod and his team on their consolidated set of recommendations based upon extensive and well grounded research. They build on the Victorian Government's commitments contained in Meeting our Transport Challenges and the more than \$10.5 billion over 10 years which is being spent on transport projects.¹⁴

The AWU commends the report to all governments and will work constructively with all stakeholders. It is now up to the Government to consider its response to the Recommendations. The AWU trusts that in so doing, the Government in commissioning the EWLNA will be guided by it, pursue every opportunity to co-opt the Rudd Labor Government in investing in the plan and move quickly toward implementation.

Endnotes

¹ **EastLink Welcomed By Those Who Built It , 29 June 2008,**
http://awu.net.au/vic/news/1214778048_30872.html

² The EastLink Environment includes extensive park and wetlands for native plants and animals, and eye catching urban design features. The EastLink Trail for cyclists and pedestrians connects with other trails, parks and open spaces. <http://www.eastlink.com.au/page.aspx?code=MOTORWAY>

³ Ibid

⁴ Followed by Sydney SD (up 52,000 people), Brisbane SD (37,200 people) and Perth SD (35,300 people).

⁵
<http://www.doi.vic.gov.au/DOI/Internet/planningprojects.nsf/AllDocs/80E779DD0C35BA08CA2573AE000509F0?OpenDocument>

⁶ EastLink will have a significant effect on urban structure and productivity in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, with the number of jobs accessible from the centre of Ringwood within a 30 minute drive predicted to increase by 67 per cent by 2011. Dandenong is predicted to enjoy a 75 per cent increase in its local jobs catchment. In other words, the relative accessibility of these centres will improve significantly over the next few years, making Ringwood and Dandenong more attractive to business and other services – leading to more jobs, more households, more growth and more wealth in these areas. EWLNA, March 2008.

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Source: ABS Cat. No. 3218.0 - Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2006-07

⁸ **fast facts, moving around Melbourne**, East-West Fact Sheet 9

⁹ Commonwealth's AusLink funding includes the \$2.25 billion widening and intelligent transport upgrade of the Western Ring Road; and \$120 million towards the \$240 million strengthening of the West Gate Bridge to improve its carrying capacity.

¹⁰ **SECURING JOBS AND THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR IN THE WEST** , The Premier of Victoria, 23 June 2008

¹¹ The Rudd Labor government, through Auslink funding, has committed:

- \$900 million to assist with the \$2.25 billion cost of the widening and intelligent transport upgrade of the Western Ring Road; and
- \$120 million towards the \$240 million cost of strengthening of the West Gate Bridge to improve its carrying capacity.

The Western Ring Road upgrade will create up to 6,500 jobs during construction and 5,500 flow-on jobs afterwards. That is 12,000 direct and indirect jobs.

¹² investing in transport, **OVERVIEW** East West Link Needs Assessment, March 2008

¹³ The Eddington Transport Study. The case for action: Sir Rod Eddington's advice to Government December 2006

¹⁴

<http://www.doi.vic.gov.au/DOI/Internet/planningprojects.nsf/AllDocs/80E779DD0C35BA08CA2573AE000509F0?OpenDocument>