

OBERON COUNCIL

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Gary Wallace

Contact:
Your Ref:
Our Ref: Grants GW: GS

20 November 2020

Mr Stephen Stead
The Western Link

Dear Mr Stead,

The Western Link is proposed as a quicker, safer and more reliable route connecting Western Sydney and Central Western NSW. The project aims to bring the communities of these two regions closer and deliver the following benefits to the region

- Increase the economic capacity of the regions west of the Blue Mountains
- Expedite opportunities for people in Western Sydney
- Improve congestion, travel times and road safety
- Better connect and help communities build a more sustainable future.

Oberon Council strongly advocates for better road networks in and around The Central West as improved transport links enhance the trade and tourism outputs within the region. A project such as the Western Link will particularly have benefits from a freight perspective as the link would significantly improve the safety, efficiency and cost of transporting pine logs from State owned softwood forests to the state significant Oberon Timber Mills.

In the Oberon area the forestry and timber manufacturing industries are major drivers of economic activity and are strategically important to the local, regional, state and national economies. At a local level approximately 1 in 5 people from the Oberon area are directly employed in the forestry and timber industries.

Regionally, more than 1000 people from the NSW Central West are directly employed in timber harvesting and transport, wood product manufacturing, forestry support services and timber wholesaling. (*Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences*).

At a State level the Oberon region is home to the State significant Oberon Timber Complex which includes Highland Pine Products and BORG Panels Pty Ltd which is a major hub for domestic timber processing within Australia with a capacity to process 1 million tonnes per year.

Nationally, more than twenty five (25) per cent of houses built each year use timber products from the Oberon area including structural timbers, house frames and timber panels. Transporting manufactured product downstream of the Oberon Mill complex especially into the Sydney basin adds to the freight task on our local and regional roads.

Agricultural industries, principally livestock production are also reliant on our local and regional freight corridors for the transport of livestock, wool, grain and fertilizer. The proposed Western link would support the efficiency and improved cost of transporting these commodities.

From a Tourism perspective the link would drastically reduce travel times for leisure travellers to access Regional NSW and generate increased visitor spend. Many visitors from Sydney don't travel further than the Blue Mountains due to travel times, congestion and connectivity. This has served the tourism industry well in the Blue Mountains but has impacted the ability for destinations on the western side of the mountains such as Oberon to attract visitors from the Sydney market.

For further information please contact Mathew Webb, Tourism and Economic Development Manager on 6329 8212 or email Mathew.webb@oberon.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Gary Wallace
General Manager