



Northern Illawarra Chamber of Commerce Inc.

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Ministerial Roundtable – Tuesday 19 April 2016

The Northern Illawarra Chamber of Commerce Inc (NICC) covers the region from Helensburgh to Thirroul inclusive.

1. Competitive disadvantage – internet connectivity and speed

A major issue for small business in our region continues to be reliable internet connection and speed. Small business in our region clearly remain at a competitive disadvantage, particularly those located North of the Sea Cliff Bridge (the 2508 postcode), compared with neighbouring areas of Wollongong or Sutherland Shire. We continue to be aware of businesses having to travel out of our region to obtain reliable service to operate their business or simply been without connection for days. NICC continues to need help from the Ministers to drive immediate improvement in connectivity and speed and to have 2508 included in current NBN construction.

Since the last Ministerial Roundtable, NICC has met with Mr Garth Ward MP who has represented our cause with the Federal Minister for Communication. We have received correspondence from the office of the Federal Minister as to the process of selection for inclusion on NBN plans for their roll-out, but nothing definitive re construction. Assistance in the latter is requested.

Further, NICC has established that a major issue re internet connectivity and speed in our region is significant deterioration of the copper wire network and an apparent reluctance of any company or authority to want to replace that copper wire or replace with alternate lines and conduits to carry future fibre. We understand that even if the NBN was in place and available today, our region will still have connectivity and speed issues in many locations due to old copper wire problems. How can the NSW Government assist in this matter?

We suggest that to accelerate replacement of copper wires that it be made mandatory that Wollongong City Council, Road & Maritime Services and any other authority that carries out road, curb and guttering or footpath construction in our region to lay conduit within that construction to facilitate future internet connections.

The previous Ministerial Roundtable indicated the possible use of regional funds to invest with Telstra. We are not aware of any progress.

2. TAFE and training

NICC supports the current initiative of the NSW Government to fund no cost courses through NSW TAFE. Will financing for these courses continue in to the next financial year?

3. F6 extension

NICC continues to support the construction of the F6 extension North into Sydney to improve access into that market from businesses located and domiciled in the Northern Illawarra and to improve flow of potential customers out of Sydney into our region.

4. Tourism Opportunities

NICC would like to thank the State Government for their contribution to the refurbishment of Bald Hill that attracts many thousands of tourists a year to the Northern Illawarra and is seen as the true gateway to the Illawarra. NICC is working with Destination Wollongong and Wollongong City Council to provide information about attractions, services and facilities in the local area. We ask that the NSW State Government consider contributions / grants to assist other tourism and heritage attractions to be established / enabled. Examples are (i) Wollongong City Council's Grand Pacific walk connecting to the coastal track through the Royal National Park at Otford and (ii) converting the old heritage listed Otford to Stanwell Park railway tunnel into a walking and cycling trail which could be used as part of the Grand Pacific walk.

5 Public Transport

Changes to the rail timetable cause incredible impact on not only residents of the Northern Illawarra but also on businesses in the Northern Illawarra - one of the biggest being the impact on available parking in Thirroul for business customers with express trains not stopping at Bulli and Austinmer. We thank the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra for his efforts to get at least a trial of additional stops of a limited number of express trains at Bulli and Austinmer. However, the impact continues on residents and businesses at the smaller villages in the Northern Illawarra as there has been an increase in travelling time both to and from Sydney in their daily commute.

One of the most common questions from local rail passengers is "Why the stop at Oatley for express trains from the South Coast?" There appears to be no logical reason for this stop and we suggest that it cannot be because of the train entering the Sydney system as this event occurs at Waterfall.

There is also the impact on the availability of paths for passenger trains of the incomplete Maldon to Dombarton freight line. We suggest that line would take a large load of the freight services to Port Kembla away from the South Coast and Illawarra line and increase the availability of freight services to Port Kembla, with a corresponding increase in employment and business in the Illawarra generally. What is the current position of the NSW Government with the Maldon to Dombarton line?

NICC appreciates the opportunity to participate in the Ministerial Roundtable and trusts that this forum continues.

End.