

What the Association is seeking

An upgrade to the Bells Line of Road to a four lane dual carriageway 100-110 kph with gradient generally less than 7% suitable for B-Double access providing an alternative route to the Great Western Highway across the Blue Mountains.

The total construction cost of the road is estimated to be between \$2 and \$3 billion with recurrent maintenance costs of 10% construction cost per annum

Why

Given that the forecast is for the Australian population to grow to 36 million by 2050, 7 million of which will be in Sydney, then regional centres such as Orange, Dubbo and Bathurst need to be much larger than the current 40,000 people, and decentralisation and regional development need to be supported by the provision of infrastructure up front rather than on a reactive basis.

The Bells Line of Road is characterised by very steep grades, tight curves and limited overtaking opportunities. The present nature of the road limits growth of both passenger and freight transport to the west.

The Central West is the only region adjacent to Sydney without road access of an appropriate standard. An adequate route between the Sydney Basin and the Central West region could facilitate growth and relieve the safety and congestion issues on the Great Western Highway.

The most significant increases in industry expansion are anticipated in manufacturing, transport and fresh market horticulture.

Tourism development as a result of the upgrade will be most marked in the areas that will become viable as day trips and short break holidays.

Shorter travel times between the Central West region and Sydney make it viable to commute or telecommute to work in Sydney, a trend evidenced in the Hunter region.

Key Facts/Figures

In the five years from completion of the Expressway, total economic growth induced by the expressway in the region is expected to be \$268 million (4.5%) in GRP, \$122 million (3.7%) in household income and 3,062 (3.9%) full time equivalent jobs. Furthermore, accident cost savings have been estimated in this report to be around \$2.7 million per annum, with the average annual savings on vehicle operating costs and travel time determined by Sinclair Knight Merz (2004) to be \$9.9 million per annum.

The Expressway would extend from Lithgow to Windsor and if constructed, would reduce travel time each way by 35 minutes for cars and 20 minutes for trucks. The total value of production in the CENTROC region is around \$6.3 billion per annum with employment of around 80,000.

Various studies indicate that the Bells Line could displace a significant proportion of traffic from the Great Western Highway. The resulting benefits to the community for the construction of the Expressway include savings in vehicle operating costs, travel time costs and accident costs. The total road user benefit was estimated to be between \$682 and \$1,037 million over a 30 year period.
