

16 December 2022

## **BUSINESS ILLAWARRA LAUNCHES STATE ELECTION PLATFORM**

The region's peak business organisation, Business Illawarra, has announced its five key election priorities for the next government of NSW at an event held last night with local members of parliament and Illawarra First members, who represent the major employers of the region.

The five priorities reflect the actions that the business group says must be taken to accelerate the economic growth of the Illawarra, according to the evidence base it has undertaken over the last several years through a series of leading research projects.

Business Illawarra Executive Director Adam Zarth said that with just over three months to go until the March state election, the time was right for the region's business community to put its requests to both major parties as they prepared their plans and policies for government.

"We have done the hard work through our research and advocacy program to prepare these five ideas that will unleash the economic potential of our region and make it an even better place to work, employ and live," said Mr Zarth.

"We will now seek the endorsement of both sides seeking to be the next government of NSW for the following five ideas, starting with the urgent need to address the antiquated rail connectivity in our region through a comprehensive plan backed by \$10 million in funding."

"Our members have been telling us for some time about an unprecedented shortage of workers to fill key roles, which is the result of a dire lack of affordable housing in our region. The next government of NSW needs to address this critical issue."

"Otherwise, we have called for action to progress our region's future as an energy powerhouse, deliver a world class sport and entertainment precinct and resolve the definitional state funding issue for Wollongong once and for all."

"Together with our members, stakeholders and supporters, we will be advocating strongly for these five priorities to receive bipartisan support over the next few months, and encourage the community to get involved."

### **Business Illawarra's State Election Platform in full:**

#### **1. Fund the \$10 million Illawarra-Shoalhaven Rail Network Resilience Masterplan**

The problem: To unleash the capacity of Port Kembla, our local industries and our highly-skilled workforce, the Illawarra needs to be connected to the growing economy of South Western Sydney – and can no longer rely on antiquated rail connectivity, which failed during recent weather events.

The ask: Business Illawarra is advocating for \$10 million to fund a Southern Rail Network Resilience Plan that includes the full consideration of the delivery of the South-Western Sydney Illawarra Rail Line in line with Business Illawarra research.

#### **2. Address the critical housing shortage facing key workers in our region**

The problem: Employers in the region are facing an unprecedented shortage of key

workers, being exacerbated by the underlying lack of affordable housing in the Illawarra Shoalhaven particularly.

The ask: Business Illawarra is seeking urgent action from the NSW Government to provide greater access to affordable housing for key workers in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven. In February 2023, Business Illawarra will release a major housing research and strategy document, and seek further commitments in accordance with its recommendations from both major parties.

3. Make the Illawarra an energy generation, renewables and clean manufacturing powerhouse

The problem: Clear commitments from the prospective next government of NSW are being sought by Business Illawarra to ensure the region reaches its potential to supply the nation with affordable, clear energy.

The ask: The next government of NSW must deliver investment to the region for a range of renewable energy and clean manufacturing programs being delivered across NSW. This should include funding to support the further development of Hydrogen Hubs, Clean Manufacturing Precincts and Renewable Energy Zones in our region.

4. Deliver a world-class Illawarra Sport and Entertainment Precinct

The problem: The Illawarra needs an iconic sports and entertainment precinct to truly be competitive as a world standard destination, which must include a state-of-the-art convention centre, major hotel developments and revitalised public spaces.

The solution: The next government of NSW must advance the prospective redevelopment of the Illawarra Sports and Entertainment Precinct with a big vision in mind, such as that proposed within the Urbis report released by Business Illawarra earlier this year. Through Business Illawarra's advocacy, funding is already allocated in the state budget for the master planning and business case development.

5. One Illawarra-Shoalhaven region, one definition

The problem: As a united regional economy, the Illawarra-Shoalhaven should no longer be divided by a definitional issue meaning Wollongong, as 'metro' cannot access funding that the other local government areas can, as 'regional'.

The solution: This should be brought into alignment as per the definition of our 'city' by the Greater Cities Commission as the 'Illawarra Shoalhaven City'. Business Illawarra advocates that the next government of NSW should do precisely that.

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**About Business Illawarra**

Formerly the Illawarra Business Chamber, *Business Illawarra* is the region's peak business organisation; a not-for-profit advocacy group dedicated to the economic development of the Illawarra.