

ITEM NO: 1**SUBJECT: WESTERN SYDNEY REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS
FEDERAL ELECTION ISSUES PAPER****FILE NO:**

Recommendation:

That the Council note the report and the WSROC Issues paper.

Report by Councillors Searle and McLaren:

On 15 October 2007, WSROC launched its “2007 Federal Election Issues Paper” at Parramatta.

In these papers, WSROC has demonstrated an awareness that modern communities are complex and affected by a wide range of issues and public policy considerations that are beyond the scope of local government. As representatives of our communities, WSROC has a responsibility to advocate on issues that impact on the quality of life for residents of Western Sydney.

Greater Western Sydney (which includes the Blue Mountains Local Government Area) is one of Australia's largest, most dynamic and productive regions. Almost 1.8 million people (almost one in 11 Australians) live in Greater Western Sydney, which is also Australia's third-largest regional economy, producing over \$80 billion annually. Yet this region and the challenges it faces from continued growth are rarely mentioned in national policy debates or identified as priorities for Federal action.

The WSROC 2007 Federal Election Issues Papers seek to address this imbalance in a constructive way. The Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils advocates on behalf of councils and communities in the WSROC region. The Councils in WSROC are: Auburn, Bankstown, Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Holroyd, Liverpool, Parramatta and Penrith.

The 17 papers, which were prepared in consultation with WSROC member Councils, reflect WSROC's policies and identify the key issues Western Sydney faces in areas of Federal Government responsibility.

Each one-page paper proposes an action plan comprising up to ten specific tasks which WSROC recommends should be undertaken by the incoming Federal Government.

These papers are grouped into five key regional themes:

- Developing the partnership between Federal and Local Government
- Federal engagement in urban planning and infrastructure
- Better educational outcomes for Western Sydney
- Managing the region's environmental challenges
- Addressing equity issues and social disadvantage in Western Sydney

Common to all the *Issues Papers* is the call for strategic Federal Government engagement in the management of the region's continued growth and the resulting need for Federal investment in social, cultural and physical infrastructure and services. These issues are just as important in the older parts of the region undergoing redevelopment as they are in the newer suburbs developing at the urban fringe.

While not downplaying the importance of other subjects dealt with in the issues papers, the *Federal-Local Partnership* and the *Environment and Climate Change* papers cover matters that are of special significance for the Blue Mountains.

The ability of Blue Mountains City Council to properly come to terms with many issues will depend on its financial capacity. This will be affected by whether or not local government receives a fair share of revenues and the extent of future cost shifting by State and Federal Governments.

As a community living in a World Heritage National Park, people in the Blue Mountains are acutely aware of the challenges posed by climate change and the need to secure clean air and water into the future.

These and other important subjects are discussed in the issues papers.

WSROC has recognised the key economic and social challenges facing the region and has provided a blueprint for the next Federal Government to start addressing them.

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Enclosures (1): WSROC Federal Election Issues Paper

OFFICERS REPORTS

