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Ref: 2016-006-let-ECC

9th February 2016

Committee Secretariat
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee,

**RE: G21-GEELONG REGION ALLIANCE SUBMISSION INTO THE ROLE OF TRANSPORT
CONNECTIVITY ON STIMULATING DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY**

As CEO of G21 - Geelong Region Alliance, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to make a submission into the role of transport connectivity on stimulating development and economic activity.

Background re G21 - Geelong Region Alliance

G21 - Geelong Region Alliance is an alliance of local government, business, industry and community organisations in the Geelong region.

The G21 - Geelong Region Alliance was established in 2002 by five Geelong region municipalities (Geelong, Queenscliff, Surf Coast, Golden Plains and Colac Otway) with the support of the Victorian Government and a wide range of local organisations.

We have over 185 members spanning all three levels of government, non-government organisations, businesses and community groups.

Under the G21 - Geelong Regional Alliance we have brought together our region's leaders to develop a high level strategic regional plan, *The Geelong Region Plan*, determine regional priority projects and advocate for their implementation.

We represent the voice of the G21 region and have a formal role as the Regional Strategic Planning Committee in advising the State and Federal Governments on regional issues and priorities.

The G21 region is one of the two sub-regions under the Barwon South West RDA Committee and is also represented at the BSW Regional Management Forum.

The G21 Region

The G21 region covers some 10,000 sq. km and has approximately 300,000 residents.

We are home to Victoria's second city, Geelong, and its suburbs, coastal and rural townships, productive farmland and major tourism attractions including the Great Ocean Road and the Great Otway National Park.

Our population is increasing at a steady rate - 1.7% per annum.

Our economy is diverse and in constant transition.

Historically manufacturing has played a major role in the G21 region economy with large employers being Ford, Shell, Alcoa, and Qantas.

However, the region's manufacturing sector has been hard hit by the closure of both Alcoa and the operation of the Qantas heavy maintenance fleet at Avalon. Ford will cease production in October this year.

The economic challenges resulting from these closures are real, imminent and far reaching. They cut deep into the community of the G21 region.

The G21 region has worked hard to diversify its economy leading to considerable growth in other employment sectors over the last twenty years especially health, education, public administration, agriculture, retail and hospitality.

Deakin University and Barwon Health are now our major regional employers.

We also have major public administration employers located here including the TAC, NDIA and WorkSafe will be relocated to Geelong.

The region is also home to the national headquarters of major retail outlets - Cotton On, Target, Quiksilver and Rip Curl.

Committee Inquiry

G21 is grateful for the Committee's inquiry into the role of transport connectivity on stimulating development and economic activity.

The G21 region has been undertaking an economic transformation over the last decade with a decline in heavy manufacturing as the major employment sector, replaced by growth in industries such as health, education, research, public administration, agriculture, retail and hospitality.

Whilst unemployment in the G21 region sits currently at an atypically low rate, (3.6%) in parts of the region such as Corio, Norlane and Colac, unemployment levels are much higher and in some, reaching over 20%.

The closure of Ford from October 2016 will result in the loss of at least a further 500 jobs with a resultant impact on the economy.

This comes on top of the closure of Alcoa and the cessation of the Qantas heavy maintenance fleet at Avalon with a loss of over 2000 direct and indirect jobs.

However, despite the at times adverse employment climate, we strongly believe there are many opportunities for investment in the G21 region to continue both the diversification of our economy and to create employment both for now and the future.

I am very pleased to be able to provide you with a range of strategic G21 documents that will assist with the identification of employment creation initiatives and opportunities for investment in the G21 region.

The documents are:

- ***The Geelong Region Plan: a sustainable growth strategy*** - launched in 2007 following two years of consultation with the G21 region community.
<http://www.g21.com.au/geelong-region-plan>

This is a high level strategic plan that looks to 2050 addressing the challenges the G21 region will face in the areas of environment, settlement, land use, community strength, economy and the way we make things happen.

- ***The G21 Region Community Profile*** - launched in December 2014
<http://www.g21.com.au/g21-region-profile>

This is a complete list of the latest data sets for the G21 region updating those used in *The Geelong Region Plan: a sustainable growth strategy*.

- **The G21 Regional Growth Plan** - incorporated into the State Planning Provisions Framework in April 2014.
http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/g21_regional_growth_plan_-_april_2013_-_low_res_0.pdf

The G21 region's population is expected to grow by another 200,000 people by 2050. This plan identifies where the 500,000 projected G21 regional population will live, work and what infrastructure is needed to support a population of that size. It is one of eight regional growth plans across Victoria.
- **The G21 RGP Implementation Plan** - unanimously approved by all five G21 Councils in November 2013.
http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/g21-rgp-ip_implementation_plan_16_dec_13.pdf

This plan identifies the infrastructure projects needed to support a population of 500,000 across the region. These projects will assist with the diversification of our economy and provide significant opportunities for employment generation.
- **The G21 Economic Development Strategy** - unanimously approved by all five G21 Councils in July 2014.
http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/web_g21_economic_development_strategy.pdf

This strategy identifies key economic "game changers" for the G21 region.
- **The G21 Region Public Transport Strategy** - launched in September 2014.
http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/final_g21_transport_a4_issued_29_07_2014_compact_web_version.pdf

Following eighteen months of consultation with the communities of the G21 region, this strategy identifies the key opportunities to invest in public transport infrastructure and improve service provision across the region.
- **The 2016 G21 Region Priority Projects** - this document lists the seventeen projects which are ready for investment in the G21 region. All projects have been endorsed by G21's five Councils and will provide significant employment opportunities for our people.
http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/basic_page/pp160101web6-jan-2016-0917.pdf

I would like to expand briefly on the G21 RGP Implementation Plan and the G21 2016 Priority Projects documents.

Both of these documents detail infrastructure investment opportunities for the G21 region which would stimulate employment.

They have been rigorously assessed across a triple bottom line framework and agreed to by our five G21 Councils.

Many of the priorities for investment in our region are focused on improving the transport connectivity. They include road and rail infrastructure to service our communities and major transport facilities including the Geelong Port and Avalon Airport.

The G21 RGP Implementation Plan

http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/g21-rgp-ip_implementation_plan_16_dec_13.pdf

This document gives effect to the G21 Regional Growth Plan which details where the expected 500,000 G21 region population by 2050 will live, work and what infrastructure will be needed to service a population of this size.

Around 240 infrastructure projects are identified in the Plan for investment over the next 30 - 40 years.

The projects are listed under five infrastructure themes:

- Transport
- Utilities
- Community
- Business
- Environment

Critical transport connectivity projects that will be catalytic in supporting the region's growth to 500,000 people and stimulate employment growth include:

- Improving transport connections to Melbourne particularly to address the congestion issue on the Westgate Bridge.
- Connection of the Geelong Ring Road to the Bellarine Peninsula.
- Geelong Ring Road and rail freight connections to the Port of Geelong and the Geelong Ring Road Employment Precinct.
- Major upgrades to the Great Ocean Road and key connecting routes to the Princes Highway.
- Geelong Port shipping channel access and berthing improvements.
- Avalon Airport precinct development and rail link.

Other key projects include:

- Princes Highway duplication to Colac.
- Midland Highway duplication to Bannockburn.
- Upgrades to key transport links from Geelong to growth areas in Armstrong Creek and Torquay/Jan Juc.
- Enhancement of public transport across the G21 region.
- Potable water supply to intensive agriculture opportunities in Golden Plains Shire.
- Redevelopment of the Geelong Performing Arts Centre.
- Redevelopment of the Portarlington and Apollo Bay Harbours.

G21 Priority Projects 2016

http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/basic_page/pp160101web6-jan-2016-0917.pdf

The five G21 Councils prioritise investment opportunities which align with *The Geelong Region Plan* each year for government's consideration.

The level of agreement around these priorities is an enormous strength for our region and assists state and federal governments to identify their investment priorities.

The 2016 G21 Priority Projects are:

- Addressing Disadvantage
- Apollo Bay Harbour Redevelopment
- Armstrong Creek Urban Growth Area
- Avalon Airport including international terminal
- Central Geelong Revitalisation
- Cruise Ship Destination - Yarra St Pier
- Geelong Convention and Exhibition Centre
- Geelong Future Cities Project including the redevelopment of GPAC and the Geelong Gallery
- Geelong Ring Road Connections to the Bellarine Peninsula and the Port of Geelong
- Geelong Ring Road Employment Precinct
- G21 Adventure Trails Project
- Geelong Secondary Schools and Community Digital Hub
- Land 400
- Portarlington Safe Harbour
- Regional Motocross Facility
- Regional Rail Links
- Transport Links to Melbourne

Transport Connectivity Challenges and Investment Opportunities

The G21 region is home to significant transport infrastructure including road, rail port and airport facilities. However, there are many transport connectivity issues which currently undermine the economic prosperity and growth of the region.

- **Rail frequency into Geelong:**
The Warrnambool - Geelong line is the least serviced in the state. There are only three train services a day from Warrnambool to Geelong which considerably affects the access of both Western District and G21 region residents to Geelong and therefore Melbourne. It is essential that passenger services be increased on this key line.
- **Road access to Melbourne:**
Congestion on the Westgate Bridge and freeway seriously undermines commuter access to Melbourne and the productivity of our region. In peak times, it regularly takes two hours to drive to Melbourne from Geelong - an 80kms journey. It is vital that a second crossing of the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers is constructed to ease congestion and raise economic prosperity.
- **Access to the Port of Geelong:**
The Port of Geelong is very important to the Victorian economy as the major bulk grain handling port. Road and rail access to the Port of Geelong need to be improved to further increase productivity. With the closure of both Alcoa and Ford, there are now opportunities to improve the necessary transport access to the port.
- **Avalon Airport:**
The G21 region is home to Victoria's second airport, Avalon. Much of the future economic prosperity of the G21 region relies on Avalon reaching its full potential as a passenger and freight international airport. Avalon currently is not designated as a regional airport and this is undermining its capacity to attract an international carrier. It is essential that the federal government addresses this issue without delay.
- **Rail duplication:**
Currently there is a single line between the South Geelong and Waurn Ponds stations. This seriously compromises the scheduling of services, undermining the public transport options for commuters. Duplication of this line is essential to maximise rail connectivity.
- **Freight and Logistics Hub:**
Proximate to Melbourne, Geelong and our region has road, rail, port, airport facilities to service our population and the transport and logistics needs for much of Victoria's produce. Our region is therefore ideally located to be the transport and logistics hub for Victoria.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on behalf of G21 - Geelong Region Alliance into the role of transport connectivity on stimulating development and economic activity.

As Geelong and our region transforms its economy through diversification, there are many transport connectivity challenges which hinder productivity and therefore regional economic growth.

In highlighting these challenges, G21 is pleased to also provide investment opportunities in this submission to improve the transport connectivity of Geelong and our region.

Elaine Carbines
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER