

# Building on infrastructure

BY CHELSEA WALLIS

Investors in residential property are expected to benefit as the Federal Government increases its investment in transport infrastructure.

The Federal Government's recent commitment to infrastructure projects is stimulating new epicentres of growth in NSW.

The move signals a step towards addressing the state's critical housing shortage. Population growth in NSW, and Sydney in particular, has outpaced the production of residential housing over each of the past six years – an unsustainable trend with a deficit of more than 10,000 houses annually.

But REINSW President Malcolm Gunning said the Government's current infrastructure pipeline has the backing of REINSW.

"Residential areas will benefit without doubt," he said. For example, "[the projects] will have a profound impact, because you'll have high volume trains into areas that traditionally have limited public transport."

The state's \$1.18 billion commitment to the Department of Planning & Environment includes \$83 million for the Housing Acceleration Fund, which delivers key infrastructure in order to support the generation of housing supply.

## Extending west

The biggest growth area to watch is Western Sydney, which is the driving force behind the city's housing acceleration according to NSW Premier Mike Baird. He announced in June that land in the suburbs close to transport and infrastructure has been rezoned or released for precinct planning,

including areas such as Marsden Park North, Redbank, Richmond, Ashlar and Blacktown.

"In Western Sydney there is a massive housing boom occurring, and the unlocking of up to 6600 new housing lots at three sites will boost housing supply and make homes more affordable," Mr Baird said.

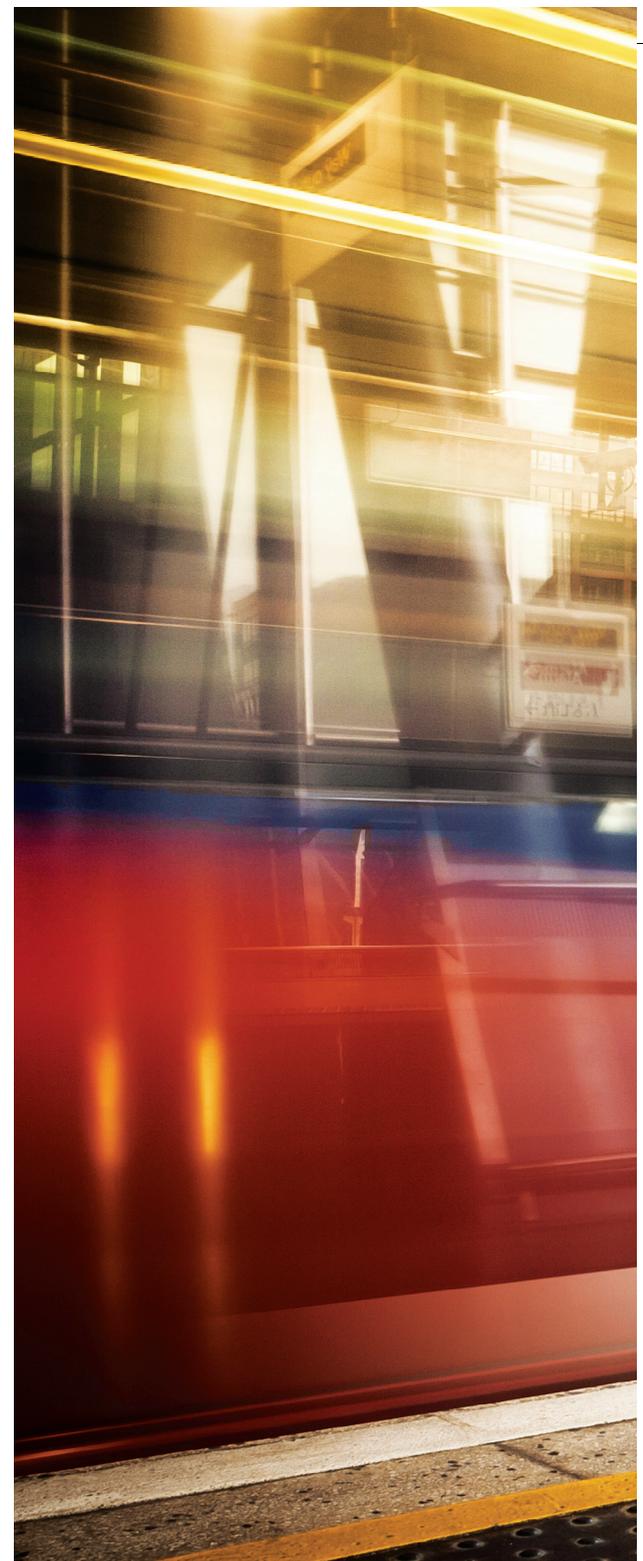
Construction of the North West Rail Link is already underway, extending public transit from Epping to Rouse Hill and creating heightened real estate activity around nearby Bella Vista and Baulkham Hills. The WestConnex, with the Stage 1 – M4 project which includes a tunnel to free up sections of Parramatta Road, is due to begin early in 2015, as well as the promise of a Badgerys Creek airport still to come.

## Other areas to watch

Also of interest is the city's CBD and South East Light Rail project, running along George Street west to Pyrmont and Dulwich Hill and southeast to Kingsford and Randwick. A pedestrian zone slated for George Street between Bathurst and Hunter Streets holds the promise of a new retail destination to complement Pitt Street Mall.

While astute investors look for regional cities and centres where the Government is investing in essential services, such as schools and hospitals, transport is still a deciding factor.

For instance, Ballina has enjoyed times of growth as its airport hosts three airlines, keeping fares low and making



the commute to Sydney relatively easy for residents as far as Byron Bay and Tweed Valley. It has the added bonus of the M1 Motorway linking Ballina to Coolangatta and Brisbane.

Further planning reforms are also on the horizon. REINSW has welcomed the changes laid out in the state's planning reform system introduced late last year, including the elimination of red tape that delayed home renovations and major developments, and the improvement of the planning process for local communities.

The Community Participation Charter detailing these processes is scheduled for release this year. ♦