1. Upgrade Transport and Freight Infrastructure
2. Create a Central Coast Development Authority and Redevelop Gosford CBD
3. Re-establish the Central Coast Area Health Service
4. Expand the Ourimbah Campus of the University of Newcastle
5. Enhanced Tourism Development
6. Better Prepare Young People for the Workforce by Improving the HSC
7. Redouble Efforts to Create Jobs on the Central Coast
8. Establish a Central Coast TAFE Trade and Apprenticeship Centre
9. Create a Single Central Coast Council
10. Develop a Regional Spotlight for the Central Coast with the Australian Bureau of Statistics
Foreword

On 10 March 2010, the Premier and Leader of the Opposition, together with the Chief Executive Officer of NSW Business Chamber, officially launched the 10 Big Ideas to Grow NSW.

For far too long, business groups, commentators and politicians spent too much time talking about the problems and challenges facing NSW. The 10 Big Ideas to Grow NSW is intended to redirect this debate to focus on opportunities and solutions.

NSW Business Chamber is proud of the success of the 10 Big Ideas to Grow NSW campaign to date; in particular the support the 10 Big Ideas have received from the NSW Government and Opposition. There is, however, more work to be done and this includes through our important regional centres. The 10 Big Ideas to Grow the Central Coast provides a unique regional perspective of the solutions to improve business conditions on the Central Coast.

Its aim is to give the Central Coast business community a voice and provide the Government and Opposition with every opportunity to support local solutions to local problems and challenges.

This paper proposes 10 Big Ideas to improve business conditions and amenity for Central Coast businesses and their community. These 10 Big Ideas to Grow the Central Coast are designed to enable the business community to pose solutions to shape the region over the coming decade by improving transport and freight infrastructure; redeveloping Gosford CBD; providing educational and job opportunities for young people and focusing on tourism as a growth industry for the Central Coast.


Worthwhile change is possible through the combined efforts of the Central Coast business community to assist to make NSW the best place to do business.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Cartwright
Chief Executive Officer
NSW Business Chamber

Ken Baker
Regional President, Central Coast
Regional Advisory Council
NSW Business Chamber Central Coast
1. Upgrade Transport and Freight Infrastructure

Recommendations:

- Develop and implement a 10 year integrated transport plan for the Central Coast
- Immediate upgrade and maintenance of local roads
  - F3 to M2 linkage upgrade
  - Upgrade intersection at West Gosford
  - Freeway access via Allison Road and additional lanes at Kariong
  - Complete Pacific Highway and Central Coast Highway upgrades

The Central Coast is a growing region and by local assessments, the Central Coast’s transport and roads systems have not coped with increases in demand in recent years. Further, with Department of Planning estimates that the Central Coast will grow by over 100,000 residents by 2031, this growth will put further pressure on roads, public transport, freight costs and infrastructure.

While the F3 delivered much needed road infrastructure at the time, investment in local roads and public transport infrastructure has not maintained pace with the Central Coast’s expansion. Today many businesses within the regional centres are experiencing trading difficulties due to the lack of car parking, congestion and general traffic management issues. These problems will be greatly exacerbated by the future planned population growth.

A long term approach is required for infrastructure on the Central Coast. An integrated, 10 year transport plan for the region should be developed by the end of 2011, and include the completion of missing road links, a regular shuttle bus service between regional centres and additional commuter car parks, cycle paths and pedestrian walkways. The plan should be devised in consultation with local businesses and the community, aimed at maximising the accessibility of public transport for residents of the Central Coast. The plan should clearly prioritise projects and must be fully funded.

Government Funded Commuter Car Parking

Additional commuter car parking is required throughout the region. Together with improved train timetabling and additional train services in the peak morning and afternoon periods, this will alleviate traffic congestion, and enhance car parking available for local businesses, visitors and residents.
Shuttle Bus Services and Satellite Parking

Based on successful shuttle bus services operating in Sydney’s CBD, Wollongong and between Parramatta CBD and Westmead, there should be a similar service provided between the regional centres of the Central Coast, operating seven days a week. Safe and reliable shuttle services help alleviate traffic congestion and remove road users from the regional centres.

The reliability of a shuttle service is crucial to encourage commuters to utilise the service. Transit lanes should be installed along the shuttle route to ensure a fast and regular service.

To complement the shuttle service, there should be a series of satellite parking areas available for shuttle users at key locations. These parking areas would benefit commuters and employees moving between regional centres, freeing up available parking within the CBD for use by shoppers and people doing business alike.

Upgrade of Local Roads

As part of a long term integrated transport plan for the Central Coast, immediate consideration should be given to the following infrastructure projects:

> F3 to M2 linkage upgrade
> Duplication of interchanges at Kariong and West Gosford
> F3 Freeway access via Allison Road
> Complete Pacific Highway and Central Coast Highway upgrades

Integrated Transport Ticketing

As part of 10 Big Ideas to Grow NSW, the NSW Business Chamber calls for the immediate delivery of an integrated transport ticketing system for NSW. Within such a system, the Central Coast should be provided with an appropriate ticket structure that encourages the use of all forms of transport.
2. Create a Central Coast Development Authority and Redevelop Gosford CBD

Recommendations:

> Establish Central Coast Development Authority
> Redevelop Gosford CBD to improve amenity and commercial activity

For too long, the Central Coast has been neglected as a priority area for infrastructure planning to improve amenity and ensure ongoing business sustainability. With current economic and population growth trends, the Central Coast will continue to be a key regional centre and immediate co-ordinated planning is required for the region to be development ready. An appropriate management structure which has responsibility for the commercial and environmental components of the entire region is required.

Modelled on the successful Hunter Development Corporation, the Central Coast Development Authority should be established as a priority to oversee the development of the waterfront, the redevelopment of Gosford CBD and undertake tourism development for the region as a whole. This proposal would include Terrigal, The Entrance, and the Peninsula. Members of the Local Chambers of Commerce would be represented on the Development Authority, contributing the voice of business to the development and ensuring that appropriate strategies to attract and retain businesses are implemented.

The Minister for the Central Coast should be appointed as the Minister responsible for the Central Coast Development Authority.

An initial priority for the Central Coast Development Authority should be the redevelopment of the Gosford CBD, which is required to attract and retain vibrant new business and visitors to the region. Redevelopment of Gosford will deliver a CBD which is more attractive, dynamic and creative; a place in which to live and work. The redevelopment should include a range of business and cultural elements. Integrated open public spaces should welcome residents and visitors to businesses, a retail centre, restaurants and entertainment facilities.

Redevelopment of Gosford CBD and the development of the Central Coast waterfront are both critical to ensure the longevity and future sustainability of the Central Coast community.
3. Re-establish the Central Coast Area Health Service

Recommendation:

> Re-establish local management of Central Coast hospitals and health services through the Central Coast Area Health Service

With the population of the Central Coast to grow by over 100,000 residents by 2031, there will be an increasing need to provide the health services required of a growing and ageing population.

Currently, the Central Coast’s health needs are served through the Northern Sydney/Central Coast Area Health Service. With funding and infrastructure pressures on that Area Health Service, it is hard to understand how this model is sustainable, given the population growth expected on the Central Coast in the coming two decades.

It is time the residents of the Central Coast had their health needs served by local management, responsible for day to day operations and the standard of health care provided. To assist in planning for the transition to a localised management structure, a health innovation summit should be convened on the Central Coast, with a number of national and regional key stakeholders brought together to discuss and formulate recommendations to advance the Central Coast’s future health needs. Discussion of workforce planning, the service capacity and capabilities of the region and responding to the emerging challenges of skills shortages and the ageing workforce, are to form the bases of the discussions.

As recommended in the 10 Big Ideas to Grow NSW, growth in regional centres can be supported by locating appropriate government agencies and providing government support in the regions. Localised management of health and hospital services for the Central Coast through the Central Coast Area Health Service would ensure the presence of medical and public sector staff and appropriate levels of services for the region.
4. Expand the Ourimbah Campus of the University of Newcastle

Recommendations:

> Expand the capabilities of the University of Newcastle Campus on the Central Coast
> Establish the Central Coast as a Health Care Training Precinct

Greater opportunities for education and training are required on the Central Coast in order to equip young residents with the necessary education services to serve their future needs, without their having to either migrate or commute from the region.

The presence of a University campus or an Institute not only encourages students to stay within their own communities, but it also encourages investment in local infrastructure to support the retention and development of a local student population.

With Newcastle University already present in Ourimbah, the Central Coast is ideally placed to host an expanded University campus, providing a diverse range of degree choices for students wishing to undertake studies from their home town. The focus of the expanded campus should align with growth industries such as allied health and tourism.

Significant Government support is required for the Central Coast to realise this objective, which includes:

> Funding for a feasibility study to identify options for a new campus and/or the extension of the existing Ourimbah campus.
> A feasibility study to explore the development of a Central Coast Institute within Newcastle University.
5. Enhance Tourism Development

Recommendations:

> Support a marketing plan to create a single identity for the Central Coast
> Development of an annual event or cultural festival on the Central Coast
> Integrate tourism planning with the Central Coast Development Authority

Tourism on the Central Coast has the potential to be a major source of economic and regional development. It offers a unique opportunity for government and the private sector to work together to develop a long term, strategic approach to planning the infrastructure and events needed to sustainably develop tourism on the Central Coast.

Located just over an hour north of the Sydney CBD, the Central Coast has enviable environmental qualities and lifestyle attractions. However, visitor numbers have been in decline in recent years and the time is right to develop an integrated and coordinated approach to reverse that trend.

Key areas of focus can include:

> Development of the Central Coast Foreshore
> Promotion of lifestyle, culture and creative arts

The Central Coast deserves to host a significant annual celebration of the arts, cultural event or festival with the potential to grow over the years to attract a dedicated audience and engage business and community interest. Funding should be made available for the conduct of a feasibility and scoping study overseen by the Central Coast Development Authority.

A marketing strategy to promote the Central Coast region to visitors, investors and new businesses to encourage tourism and events is required.

The Central Coast NSW Business Chamber is a natural partner to work with the Local Chambers of Commerce, Regional Development Australia, the Department of Industry and Investment and Local Government in strengthening perceptions about the Central Coast as a strong tourism hub.
6. Better Prepare Young People for the Workforce by Improving the HSC

Recommendation:

> The HSC should be made more flexible to encourage increased participation of students in vocational education.

The Higher School Certificate should be strengthened by providing greater opportunities and flexibility for students wishing to undertake vocational training.

For too long, the successful completion of year 12 has been defined as the attainment of an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) for entrance into university. Yet only 76% of young people stay at school until year 12. Of those, only about 70% go to university.

In 10 Big Ideas to Grow NSW, the NSW Business Chamber calls for a strengthened vocational stream within the HSC, for students who wish to complete vocational training, including a traineeship or apprenticeship. It is important that these students are encouraged to pursue all vocational opportunities available on the Central Coast. This will also contribute to a lessening of the unacceptably high levels of youth unemployment on the Central Coast.

The increase in the school leaving age means that the HSC needs to change to meet the needs of a different group of students. On the Central Coast, this means urgent attention to improving vocational education in schools, and school based apprenticeships. There is a need to improve industry relevant literacy and numeracy skills for young people, and improve access to apprenticeships and other skills related programs for young people. Equal focus also needs to be placed on other disadvantaged and mature aged workers.
7. Redouble Efforts to Create Jobs on the Central Coast

Recommendation:

- Development of job opportunities to be directed to local industries, including Tourism and Health Services

The Central Coast is an important economic catchment. In 2008, the population of the Central Coast was just over 310,500 and by 2031, is expected to grow by approximately 100,000 new residents. As a key proposed growth region, it provides new and exciting opportunities for existing and new businesses.

The Central Coast already has a range of business services, high quality retail outlets, recreation and cultural activities as well as a labour force which is highly skilled. To boost job opportunities in the region, high quality events should be brought into the region to provide greater local job choices for local residents. Through the Central Coast Development Authority, job creation initiatives and tourism event management will be key priorities, both supporting the expansion of local skills acquisition and business development opportunities.

The NSW Business Chamber supports initiatives that relocate Government departments or their offices to the Central Coast which contribute to new employment opportunities, or build clusters which contribute to the development of new collateral industries and employment growth. The re-establishment of the Central Coast Area Health Service is a critical part of job creation for the Central Coast. There will be the added benefit of the clustering of support and allied health services in the region, fostering education, business and sustainable communities.

The diversity of the Central Coast is an important element of its economic and lifestyle attractiveness. It is crucial that planning and infrastructure development retains this diversity and that development is applied consistently across the region. Further, any additional growth or redevelopment needs to be supported by a hierarchy of major and specialised centres and employment centres that are well connected by transport.
8. Establish a Central Coast TAFE Trade and Apprenticeship Centre

Recommendations:

> Establish a state-of-the-art trade training facility for school based and general apprenticeship training

> Focus on regionally specific industries including food production, manufacturing and processing; marine science; aged care; alternative and allied health; and tourism

Trade Training Centres

The Central Coast has a well trained, highly skilled labour force, but is at high risk of being negatively affected by state-wide skills shortage, which are affecting trades in particular. Critical to addressing skills shortages is the provision of vocational education and training services for students that meet industry’s needs for a skilled workforce. Business applauds the work of TAFE colleges in working with industry to align training courses within industry growth sectors. This excellent work should be extended to provide a permanent trade training facility on the Central Coast.

Importantly, the Education Department needs to provide greater flexibility in curriculum and course work timetabling to allow greater numbers of students to actively participate in greater numbers of vocational education courses, through traineeships and school based apprenticeships.

Whilst the Hunter Institute of TAFE currently has campuses at Wyong, Ourimbah and Gosford, the anticipated population growth of the region warrants the establishment of a Central Coast TAFE. Central Coast TAFE would provide a venue for young people to improve their skill set and employability, while remaining within the community. Importantly it also provides employment opportunities for teaching and support staff, and those mature aged workers who seek to convert their trades skills and knowledge into a teaching qualification. Access to courses related to growth industries, such as allied health and tourism, should be prioritised.
9. Create a Single Central Coast Council

Recommendation:

> Amalgamation of the Wyong and Gosford Local Councils into a single Central Coast Council

Local Government reform is required on the Central Coast to deliver a single regional council, focussed on strategic overview of the development requirements for the region.

It is clear that development on the Central Coast is being stifled by an outdated approach to local government and planning. Even the Minister for the Central Coast has not been able to deliver the outcomes expected to grow the Central Coast. With the expected increased of over 100,000 new residents to the region by 2031, streamlined and strategic decision making is urgently required.

The 10 Big Ideas to Grow NSW recommends local government reform to amalgamate the 41 local councils in metropolitan Sydney into ten strong regional councils to replicate the ten sub-regions of Sydney indentified in the Government’s Metropolitan Strategy. This same principle can be applied to non-metropolitan areas, including the Central Coast.

Local government operations suffer through a lack of certainty and flexibility. Increasing demands are placed on local councils that have little or no access to increased levels of appropriate funding support.

Further, revenue pressures have constrained the activities of councils who are looking for new and innovative ways to raise revenue, which in the most part has resulted in additional costs being borne by businesses and their customers, a trend which is neither desirable nor sustainable.

NSW Business Chamber supports the new functions for IPART in regulating local government rates and charges as a means of strengthening and securing the capacity of local government.
10. Develop a Regional Spotlight for the Central Coast with the Australian Bureau of Statistics

Recommendation:

> Develop a Regional Spotlight for the Central Coast with the Australian Bureau of Statistics

Spotlight on the Central Coast is proposed to as a community indicator to be developed in partnership between the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Central Coast Chambers of Commerce, NSW Business Chamber and Regional Development Australia Central Coast.

The aim of the Spotlight on the Central Coast is to bring together information about the Central Coast, from a wide variety of sources, including that sourced from local government, to provide a practical framework for promoting the Region, highlighting its most favourable and numerous assets, and to underpin the development of a use in regional strategic management plan.

With the Bureau of Statistics, the Central Coast NSW Business Chamber will develop the Spotlight on the Central Coast following wide consultation with people living, working and delivering services on the Central Coast, particularly those businesses represented by the Central Coast Chambers of Commerce.

The Spotlight on the Central Coast will contribute significantly to the ability of the Central Coast to advocate on issues relevant to business, the ongoing development of the Central Coast, and these 10 Big Ideas to Grow the Central Coast to ensure the ongoing sustainability, vitality and liveability of the communities which comprise it.
1. Ensure taxpayers get better value for money by auditing government services and performance.
2. Create jobs by cutting employment taxes and red tape.
3. Protect the NSW Budget by fighting for a fairer share of the GST.
4. End the blame game in hospitals by handing funding to the Federal Government.
5. Move economic growth to the centre of State Government decision making by establishing the Department of Business Growth.
6. Encourage growth in regional NSW through funding government and business relocations to regional areas.
7. Get the politics out of infrastructure by establishing Infrastructure NSW.
8. Take charge of Sydney traffic by appointing a Transport Tsar.
10. Better prepare young people for the workforce by improving the HSC for students not attending university.