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Electric Dreams: Local EV bus manufacture needs investment vision ^{Featured}



Lithgow aerial image

Lithgow City Council

Media Release, 5 February 2021, **The NSW Government's electric vehicle vision for NSW would be more rapidly realized with a local manufacturing hub in an established regional centre such as Lithgow, says WSROC.**

NSW Minister for Roads and Transport Andrew Constance launched Western Sydney's first electric-powered bus in Leppington this week, marking a key step in the Government's promise to transition the state's full fleet by 2030.

However, with 8000 buses to be replaced statewide, WSROC President Barry Calvert says the transition is an opportunity for the Government to invest in locally-manufactured vehicles, by establishing a regional manufacturing hub.

"The drive toward an electric vehicle transport future is underway, and the NSW transition goal is striking out in the right direction. However, establishing a local manufacturing hub needs an accelerated vision of resourcing and investment.

"An accelerated vision for local manufacture would provide an enormous boost to a regional centre such as Lithgow. The birthplace of Australia's iron and steel industry, Lithgow has a proud manufacturing lineage, impacted by industry shifts in recent years. It is a City of skilled and capable workers, ready for new opportunities," said Clr Calvert.

Lithgow City Council General Manager, Craig Butler, said Lithgow's workforce is primed for new opportunity, with an economy already in transition from energy production. "For decades, Lithgow has played a central role in support of the NSW economy through the provision of a stable, bulk electricity supply to the grid. Our miners and power station employees are front-line workers, because houses, hospitals and industry do not function without energy. But the number of jobs in these sectors is diminishing.

"At the crossroads of four major highways, Lithgow is the gateway to both Sydney and the Central West. We boast real opportunity for a tree-change lifestyle within reach of the metropolis, and an ample supply of affordable housing.

"Lithgow is slated for new renewable energy infrastructure, but concern exists about the small numbers of jobs they offer. A manufacturing hub for electric-powered buses in the city would be a master-stroke for the NSW Government to lead, bringing real vision to transitioning regional futures – including the much-needed jobs that come with a shift to renewables – as well as building confidence in our national capabilities."

Clr Barry Calvert said the Government's target to transition the state's full fleet of 8000 buses by 2030 will need significant investment, if increased local manufacture is a priority. "While the Minister has reiterated this goal, currently, these buses are being made partly overseas and partly locally.

"An investment in local manufacturing capability by the NSW Government would be timely and strategic. A regional hub, connected to Western Sydney's increasing growth, will accelerate the delivery of EV transition goals and give a powerful boost to regional jobs and the NSW economy.

Clr Calvert continued, "The shift to electric-powered buses is a golden opportunity for the state government to deliver a vision for locally-built, large-scale vehicles, such as electric buses and other heavy transportation, and claim a new manufacturing narrative for regional New South Wales."

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