MEDIA RELEASE

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NORTH WEST RAIL LINK GETS PLANNING GREEN LIGHT

State Government planning approval has been given to start building the North West Rail Link, marking a major milestone in the delivery of the State’s biggest transport infrastructure project.

Minister for Transport Gladys Berejiklian said overarching approval has been given for the entire North West Rail Link project, as well as approval to start construction of the 15.5km of twin tunnels and the 4km skytrain section.

“The NSW Government is committed to providing a public transport rail link for the people of Sydney’s fastest-growing area,” Ms Berejiklian said.

“This tick of approval means we can get on with the job of getting the tunnel boring machines in the ground in 2014.”

The approval of the first Environmental Impact Statement was granted by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Brad Hazzard and includes:

- Two 15.5km rail tunnels between Epping and Bella Vista;
- Excavation works for railway station construction, including the underground caverns; and
- Above ground construction, including a 4km viaduct structure between Bella Vista and Rouse Hill.

A second Environmental Impact Statement later this year will allow the community to have its say on other issues like the design of the eight new train stations, access points to the stations as well as the areas around them, and how the railway will operate.

The North West Rail Link will include eight railway stations at Cherrybrook, Castle Hill, Hills Centre, Norwest, Bella Vista, Kellyville, Rouse Hill and Cudgegong Road as well as 4,000 commuter car parking spaces.

“This is a monumental day for current and future residents of north-western Sydney,” Ms Berejiklian said.

“Over coming decades, an extra 200,000 people will move into the North West, taking the region’s population above 600,000.”
“As more people move to the North West there is going to be more demand on key transport and roads corridors – which is why building a world class rail line to attract more people to public transport is so important.

“We will deliver a new generation of fast, safe and reliable trains – the people of the North West will be the first in Sydney to get the new single deck trains as part of our Sydney's Rail Future plan.”

Ms Berejiklian said three consortia had been short-listed to tender for the multi-billion-dollar tunnelling contract, with tenders expected to be called later this month.

There have been 18 major tenders and 38 key contracts awarded so far.

More than 350 submissions were received during six weeks of public consultation on the first North West Rail Link Environmental Impact Statement.

A number of conditions have been imposed by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Brad Hazzard as part of the planning approval to address the issues raised in these submissions, including requirements to:

- Restrict above-ground construction activities, not associated with tunnelling, to 7am to 6pm on weekdays and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays, with no construction on Sundays;
- Prepare a business management strategy and engage in ongoing consultation with business owners affected during construction;
- Agree, in consultation with the relevant local council, on mitigation measures where community and council facilities are impacted by construction, including Cheltenham Oval, Beecroft Reserve, Castle Hill Showground and Arthur Whitling Park;
- Offset the loss of native vegetation and prepare a management plan to manage potential impacts on flora and fauna;
- Undertake detailed water quality monitoring of nearby waterways during and following the completion of construction.

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