



2 July 2026

The Director  
Integrity & Investigations  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development,  
Communications, Sport and the Arts  
GPO Box 594  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Attention James Savage Assistant Secretary HSR & Infrastructure Advisory

## High Speed Rail – HSR

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We refer to your letter of 1 April 2026 in reply to our 27 February submission to the Hon Catherine King MP.

We note your advice that *'the Australian Government is committed to high speed rail on Australia's east coast.'*... and is ... *'developing a business case for the first stage connecting Newcastle and Sydney.'*

HSR can provide significant east coast and regional benefits – but the proposed initial Newcastle Sydney section is not considered practical or viable – and is very unlikely to be realised.

As outlined in our 27 February submission, we consider an inland alignment is essential for reasons including

- ❖ Significantly lower cost – by eliminations most of the very extensive proposed tunnels (115km) and bridges (38Km)
- ❖ HSR alignment should be part of a long term East Coast and regional strategy
- ❖ Connecting HSR links – with tunnels as required – can be provided to major coastal and regional centres



## **Costing review**

The proposed first stage is currently estimated to cost \$90 billion for 194± kilometers of HSR between the Sydney CBD, Gosford and Newcastle. The coastal alignment includes over 100 km of tunnels and almost 40kms of bridges in difficult terrain, resulting in a currently estimated cost of \$A460 million / kilometre.

Asian and European HSR costs are \$A50 to \$A100 million / kilometre, while the current UK HS2 costs are similar to the proposed Sydney Newcastle HSR.

The extremely expensive coastal alignment will provide almost no regional benefits and compromise longer term east coast HSR strategies. The estimated 2026 \$90 billion costs will increase as planning proceeds, further eroding viability.

## **Recommended strategy**

We recommend a regional alignment, west of the Great Dividing Range with HSR regional and coastal links, to significantly benefit connectivity – and provide a framework for regional development hubs and longer term east coast HSR.

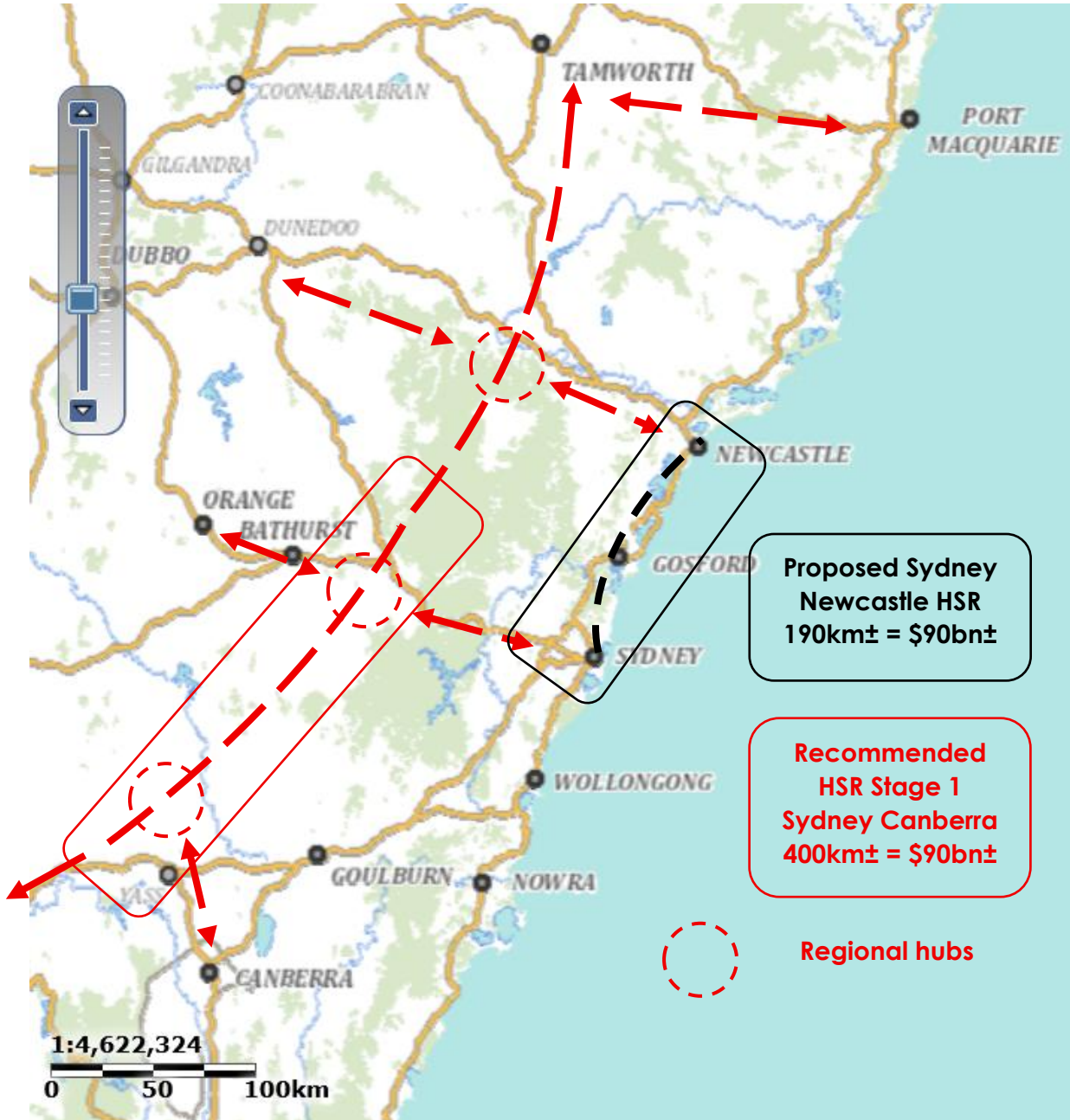
An indicative cost of \$A200m / km, with significantly reduced tunnels and bridges, provides 400km± of east coast HSR with regional and coastal HSR connections.

The attached diagram illustrates the benefits of allocating the currently proposed budget to a first stage Sydney / Canberra / NSW regional HSR alignment.

We request the opportunity to meet and discuss our proposal, for this alternative HSR regional alignment, with government and our consortium team.

MICHAEL FOX AM  
Director

Copy            The Hon Catherine King MP



Recommended HSR strategy

regional alignment