



## OPINION

# Labor's major cities plan no minor matter

By KEVIN RUDD \*

**T**HE role of the Federal Government is to be a leader when it comes to preparing Australia for the challenges of tomorrow.

That's why I have announced that a Rudd Government will establish the major cities program.

Right now the Howard Government's total infrastructure budget is about \$5.5 billion nationally and most of that is spent on building roads in the bush.

These are important projects. But there are also critical infrastructure needs in

Australia's major cities, including Sydney.

About 1000 people move to Sydney every week, largely

off the back of a Federal Government immigration program, placing huge new infrastructure pressures on the Sydney basin.

Unfortunately the Federal Government doesn't see itself as having any real responsibility in dealing with the consequences of that inflow. This is another example of the blame game.

I intend to change that.

Labor's major cities program will provide funding assistance for Sydney's urban infrastructure needs, especially road, rail and water.

Why do we want to do this? It's simple.

Federal Government policy brings a whole lot of new people into cities like Sydney.

Therefore I believe the

Federal Government should also help shoulder some of the infrastructure burden.

Second, I want to implement policies which increase national productivity.

One critical way of doing that is by making sure urban transportation systems are coping with demand, not impeding economic productivity and not unnecessarily interfering with people's lives.

Federal Labor governments in the past have had a proud history of engaging in urban infrastructure needs.

It's time we applied this tradition to the future infrastructure needs of Australia's major cities and Sydney is central to that task.

On roads, we are going to examine ways to assist the

NSW Government in providing a motorway link between the M7 and the F3, linking western Sydney to the Central Coast.

On rail, we will look at providing funding support for projects like the fast rail link to Penrith.

On water, we will be examining, as a matter of absolute priority, what still needs to be done to deal with Sydney's future challenges in regard to water problems.

I intend to work with state governments and, where relevant, the local authorities who are responsible for Australia's major cities to develop our priority list.

*\* Kevin Rudd is Federal leader of the Australian Labor Party*