

Local Government

Record \$11b of projects approved

■ **Melanie Kembrey**

The value of major regional developments approved in western Sydney has risen 180 per cent over nearly three years.

The Sydney West Joint Regional Planning Panel (JRPP) has approved 129 projects worth nearly \$5.7 billion this financial year, a higher value than any other state panel. Six planning panels were introduced across NSW in 2009 to make decisions on significant regional developments (excluding City of Sydney) worth more than \$20 million.

The Sydney West panel takes in 16 local council areas including Parramatta, Liverpool, Banks-

town, Auburn and the Blue Mountains. State government figures show the panels collectively have approved projects worth a record \$10.9 billion since July 2015 – nearly 70 per cent higher than the value of approvals in the financial year to 2014.

Western Sydney projects make up nearly half of the developments approved by the panel in the year to date. Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils president Tony Hadchiti said the figure reflected rapid development in the region's northwest and southwest areas.

"Government investment in significant and much needed infrastructure projects – particularly

the Sydney Metro network, Western Sydney Infrastructure program and WestConnex – gives certainty both to developers and prospective home buyers entering the market," Cr Hadchiti said.



'This result also shows the value of a joint, subregional approach to planning.'

Tony Hadchiti

"This result also shows the value of a joint, subregional approach to planning. JRPPs have allowed state government and local councils to work together on projects that provide benefit to the

great western Sydney community." A JRPP spokesman said 95 per cent of panel determinations were in line with recommendations from council staff. "This indicates that the recommendations from council planning assessment staff are a key factor when the JRPPs determine projects."

Chris Johnson, chief executive of developer lobby group Urban Taskforce Australia, welcomed the figures but said planning approvals took too long.

"I think the average time for buildings over \$20 million was 250 days," Mr Johnson said.

"So while it's really good to get these up and running, we do need to look at how long they are taking and really try to speed these up."