RESEARCH commissioned by western Sydney councils has found population growth will outstrip job growth unless the region can better diversify away from manufacturing.

The report found that the State Government’s target of 280,000 new jobs in western Sydney over the next two decades will not be met, and residents will travel further for work, clogging roads.

It also found that there has been no real improvement in the local availability of jobs over the past 10 years.

Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils president Alison McLaren said regional tax incentives for emerging industries may be one option.

“This is an urgent wake-up call to all levels of government and to the business community that we need to sit down and work out a plan or else 20 years from now western Sydney will be in dire straits,” she said.

The study found that the region is one of the most car-dependent in the world.

It also found that western Sydney’s reliance on manufacturing jobs means it will fare worse in the economic downturn and will struggle to recover.

Prof Phillip O’Neill from the University of Western Sydney wrote the report and says public investment and strategic planning are needed.

“(We need) an attention to quality infrastructure, quality skills training, quality IT and so on, in order to attract those highly skilled, better-paid professional sectors into the western region economy,” he said.

Premier Nathan Rees rejected suggestions the Government has been neglecting western Sydney when it comes to jobs.

“Any assertion about western Sydney, to the extent that it would become a dormitory suburb, is well and truly off the mark,” he said. “It’s thriving.”