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Terms of Reference

That the Committee inquire into and report on commuter car parking in NSW.

Brian Mackenzie

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Preamble:

I believe that the terms of reference are too broad and are not altogether relevant when considered for much of the State. The greater area of the State does not see issues regarding overwhelmed commuter car parking issues at rail or bus interchanges because, for a greater portion of the State, they no longer have rail or bus infrastructure to rely on. The terms of reference should have identified that the issue is that found in the major centres on the eastern seaboard. As such I will confine my comment to history witnessed on inadequate, poorly planned or just plain corrupt commuter infrastructure effort on the Richmond rail line – an area in the North West Growth Area of Western Sydney.

a) The effectiveness of current state government policies and programs covering commuter car parking;

I do not believe that the current State Government or the prior State Labor Government have/had any idea regarding the needs of commuters and this was and is supported by equally inept Government transport agencies such as Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation (TIDC) that became Transport Construction Authority (TCA) that then joined Transport for NSW).

NOTE: In a broad explanation that helps to explain poor commuter car park planning I need to identify poor or corrupt planning effort with regard to rail infrastructure (that needed adequate commuter car parking). For this I offered the “newest” station on the Richmond rail line – Schofields. With regard to station references below it would be quite easy to become confused with “what went where”. To clearly identify “what went where” I have to show that the Government agencies involved intentionally subverted what the “new” Schofields Station actually is (noting the DRAFT guidelines) http://www.mumbaidp24seven.in/reference/interchange_design_guidelines.pdf).

1. Originally the intent was to rebuild Schofields Station (Local Infrastructure station) at its location and build the planned NEW Nirimba Station (Multi Access infrastructure station), at the intersection of Burdekin Road and Railway Terrace (at the Nirimba Town Centre – see North West Growth Centre Structure Plan – Edition 3 - triangle).

2. As stated the intent was to rebuild the original Schofields Station (Local Infrastructure station central to the original township on Railway Terrace - also shown on North West Growth Centre Structure Plan – Edition 3 - triangle).

3. However, the Ministry of Transport, in the Alex Avenue Precinct Planning Report, referred to the relocation of the Nirimba Multi Access Infrastructure station 600 metres north of its planned location. This is the ONLY time that this distance and location is documented.
4. ALL further references by Government agencies and in the Briefing Paper used to justify the "relocation" of Schofields Station refer to the relocation of the original Schofields Station 850 metres SOUTH (being the location of the relocated Nirimba Station). Note that all 8 "reasons" given in the Briefing Paper as justification to remove the original Schofields rail station have now been shown/proven to be false/incorrect.
5. That is a planned Multi Access Infrastructure station relocated 600 metres north to be a Multi Access Infrastructure station whilst Government agencies consistently referred to the relocation of a Local Infrastructure station 850 metres south to be a Multi Access Infrastructure station. If this is not confusing enough the schematic offered to the Government by the Government agencies to support their decision shows the distance of 850 metres being shorter than the actual 600 metre relocation. Evidence that can be seen today is that commuter car parking on road (Railway Terrace) has reached what would have been the planned location for the Nirimba Station whilst commuter car parking in the other direction is still approximately 200 metres short of the site of the original Local Infrastructure Schofields Station.

I understand that the Inquiry would not see how this would be relevant to adequate commuter parking so the following is offered (hopefully to clarify):

a. The earlier planned Nirimba Multi Access infrastructure station was to be built at the intersection of Burdekin Road and Railway Terrace Schofields,
b. At a planned sub arterial road with rail overpass that will join Windsor Road and Richmond Road (east-west corridor),
c. That would have had land available for use for commuter parking stations BOTH sides of the rail line (with the western side available from the Commonwealth Government), and
d. Had been intended to have parking for 750 – 1000 vehicles (Urban Horizon 2007 reference - Rail Corp).

Outcome – At the original location there would have been ample space for commuter parking on both sides of the rail line for over a 1000 vehicles. Rail Corp determined a parking requirement for 750 – 1000 vehicles whilst subsequent TIDC planning with the "relocation" saw only 230 commuter car parking spaces. The contradiction of parking space numbers between the two agencies are shown in the same Urban Horizon report.

Government department individual deliberations on the station location options (unable to be validated as there is no evidence available under Freedom of Information) saw the station relocated 600 metres north of its planned location (as nominated by the Ministry of Transport) onto what was private land offered [redacted] but with only 250 vehicles spaces (Urban Horizon 2007 reference – TIDC). Note that the planned TIDC 250 car parking spaces was not achieved and there was only parking for 230 vehicles. Even the most current effort in 2017 sees further expenditure of $2.75 million to add a further meagre 60 parking spaces.

The Department of Planning offers a walking catchment of 800 metres in its planning documentation – this sees (for this station) most if not all of the new build housing on the private land whilst the original township (that were within the 800 metre walking catchment of the rail station they lost) are outside the new station walking catchment.

The most current DRAFT Government guidelines on rail transport infrastructure that have been found are http://www.mumbaidp24seven.in/reference/interchange_design_guidelines.pdf. These guidelines are, at best, somewhat vague and suggest that there may be commuter parking supplied at rail infrastructure locations but local streets can be considered as part and parcel of the commuter parking solution. Therefore, it must be considered that the streets of the new housing development are intended to take up the "missing" 710 parking spots that were "planned" for the original station site.

However, ALL of the surrounding low, medium and high density developments in a radius in excess of 8 kms offer Schofields as the nearest station so the issue at Schofields will only get a lot worse as development continues. There is only one area of land in close proximity to this station location that could support a multi storey commuter parking facility and that would be above a currently open recreation/drainage site on the corner of Schofields Road and Railway Terrace. The end result is not a parking facility much larger than initially required with time seeing it fully utilised but a facility overwhelmed from its first day of operation.

b) Processes for selecting the location of commuter car parks;

I would be quite happy to be shown what formal procedure is used to justify decisions made by Government agencies regarding how they determine locations. From what I have witnessed, to date, documentation justifying decisions is often impossible to find and compounded by Government "convenience" in public agency name changes (example TIDC became TCA which has now been moved into Transport for NSW). It appears the easiest way to cover incompetent decisions is to maintain staff and put them under a new department name.

I will, however, offer another example of Government agency incompetence with regard to the effort to increase commuter parking at another station on the Richmond line - Quakers Hill station (Quakers Hill station commuter parking remains a MAJOR issue due to the earlier inability of TIDC to conduct an honest and competent investigation and planning to overcome chronic commuter parking problems) .

The following is the submission I offered covering the TIDC report (community consultation) sent to TIDC on 28 August 2009 (close to 8 years ago). The submission process was a waste of time as TIDC had already purchased land on the western side of the line (in line with their determination). This did nothing to overcome the parking issue on the eastern side of the line. You might care to note that my request for the missing "PRO" and "CON" information on the two sites was never honoured (if it had been supplied it would have only shown how incompetent the TIDC decision was):

I wrote:

TIDC are to be congratulated on a much better presentation afforded the proposed Quakers Hill Car Park. Unlike the inept and dishonest presentation covering Schofields Rail Station, this presentation offers **both options that were considered** however, the Lalor Road site critique (eastern side) only offered the negative aspects determined by those conducting the investigation whilst the Railway Road critique (western side) only offered the positive aspects. Yet again, the potential is there to manipulate data to promote an outcome that may have determined by individual TIDC officers.

In order to introduce a greater modicum of honesty would you mind including the positive aspects of the Lalor Road site and the negative aspects of the Railway Road site, please.

Further, your report indicates that there is a significant number of cars parked in the surrounding streets, which would suggest that Quakers Hill, in a developing area, is a preferred location for those who drive from surrounding areas. It must be expected that the level of parking area required will continue to increase in the course of further development. Your report also states that preferred parking is predominately on the side of the Lalor Road option. This would suggest that it is either the easier location to access or the more convenient location for commuters currently driving to and using Quakers Hill Station.

Commonsense would suggest that the build of sufficient parking spaces should be greater than the current requirement (not less than or equal to the current requirement). Your report also states that a considerable number of cars parked on the Lalor Road side are in excess of 400 metres from the rail station. This makes a nonsense of the one of the negative aspects listed against the Lalor Road site as it is no further than those cars noted as being further than 400 metres from the station.

On the basis of walking distance and preferred location for parking there has to be benefit in further consideration in incorporating the Lalor Road option. Further, noting the current level of parking in the area attributed to rail commuters, and with known future development it would be a fairly logical determination to incorporate the use of both sites (noting that the TIDC proposal for the Nirimba Station named "new" Schofields Station has nominated parking on both sides of the proposed station).

END OF SUBMISSION TO TIDC

From the TIDC report (they showed a poor sense of direction – Rail Corp car parking spaces are on the eastern and western side of the Quakers Hill station).

2.4 Alternatives and Options Considered

Current commuter parking provision around Quakers Hill is entirely 'on-street' with the only dedicated commuter parking being angle parking for 118 RailCorp provided spaces (71 on north side, 47 on southern side) adjacent to the station. **As such, there is wide spread 'on-street' commuter parking extending beyond 400m from the station** which competes with any on-street short term or resident parking. The residences in the vicinity of the station have driveway access protected by line markings on the road. The commercial businesses in the Quakers Hill village centre to the south of the railway line have shopper parking protected by time restrictions to deter commuter parking in the spaces closest to the station. A nearby child care centre on the northern side of the railway line also has time restricted and staff allocated parking to protect local business interests.

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Two potential sites were identified at Quakers Hill for further analysis. One site is located to the north of the station on the eastern side of the railway line on Council land adjoining the Child Care Centre at the junction of Pearce and Lalor Roads (refer Figure 2.1 – Alternative Site Considered (Lalor Road)). The other site is located almost directly opposite the station on the south western side, fronting Railway Road on private land.

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The preferred site quickly emerged after applying relevant site selection criteria.

Lalor Road Site

• Heavily treed with mature Cumberland Plain Woodland that would need to be removed and currently acts as a visual and noise buffer to the Quakers Hill Parkway overbridge;

• A linking site to a regional recreational cycle and walking path;

• Site prone to flooding;

• The site is virtually landlocked with little road frontage that could create safety and surveillance concerns;

• Potential traffic conflict with children arriving and departing from child care centre at similar times to commuter arrivals and departures.

• Increased traffic through shopping street;

• The walking distance to the station would exceed 400m with limited pedestrian crossing of the railway line with a long ramp that increases walking distance; and

• Noise impacts on adjoining sensitive receiver during construction.

ADD "PROS".

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Railway Road site (19-23 Railway Road and 7 Douglas Road)– PREFERRED SITE

• Close proximity to station with safe pedestrian crossing and accessible grades;

• Complementary strategic and statutory location in business zoning on perimeter of Quakers Hill village commercial centre;

• Minimal disruption to existing 'on-street' car parking during construction;

• Traffic access to rear of shops;

• Removal of recent regrowth Cumberland Plain Woodland would be required;

• Existing open drainage through site would need to be enclosed however this can link directly into adjoining watercourse drain; and

• Privately owned site up for mortgagee sale at time of investigations simplifies acquisition process.

ADD "CONS".

By the way the justification offered by TIDC to preclude the Lalor Road site can be easily shown as "convenient" (no positives listed – same as their preferred site no negatives listed). Their justification (*my comment to each in italics*):

The preferred site quickly emerged after applying relevant site selection criteria.

Comment – TIDC had "site selection criteria"?

Lalor Road Site

• Heavily treed with mature Cumberland Plain Woodland that would need to be removed and currently acts as a visual and noise buffer to the Quakers Hill Parkway overbridge;

Comment – Not a heavily treed location and much of the area they were referring to is an open drainage system (currently a Council off lead dog area).

• A linking site to a regional recreational cycle and walking path;

Comment – There is a cycle and walking path – as there is on the other side of the rail line next to the car park they built.

• Site prone to flooding;

Comment – The drainage area is subject to run off (on occasion). Commonsense would see any parking facility built above this.

• The site is virtually landlocked with little road frontage that could create safety and surveillance concerns;

Comment – With competent planning a commuter parking facility could be built over the drainage area and either side of the Quakers Hill Parkway with access to both east and west lanes of the Parkway.

• Potential traffic conflict with children arriving and departing from child care centre at similar times to commuter arrivals and departures.

Comment – This is written on the basis that there is no planning to consider alternate access points.

• Increased traffic through shopping street;

Comment – The shopping street is on the other side of the line – <u>where they put the car park</u>.

• The walking distance to the station would exceed 400m with limited pedestrian crossing of the railway line with a long ramp that increases walking distance;

Comment – Distance to the station is around 200 metres and there would be no reason for commuters to park their cars and cross the rail line. This distance was considered so short that TIDC did not replace the pedestrian crossing of the rail line at this location – instead pedestrians in the area who need to cross the rail line to go to the shops use the station crossover – as planned by TIDC.

• Noise impacts on adjoining sensitive receiver during construction.

Comment – No noise after construction and, anyway, the same applied to the build the other side

c) The potential for restricted access or user pays commuter car parks;

I see no issue with "user pays" car parks (that is for purpose built car parks with some form of security for vehicles parking in such a facility). I believe that the current calculation for parking spaces in purpose built car parks is $30K per vehicle. A cost per day for parking (say $5) would

recoup the build cost in as little as four years and then allow for the parking cost to reduce to allow for maintenance and cleaning costs. At this time the OPAL card system would be ideal for this but the issue remains that there are no competent planners in the State Government/Government departments that forward plan so that infrastructure built is that sufficient for at least 20 years (the last competent planner was John Bradfield and only the bridge was built – not the entire system he planned).

d) Consideration of alternative modes of first mile/last mile travel, including point to point transport, active transport and on demand buses;

Sorry I had to Google "first mile/last mile" reference. I would have thought that, whilst the term used is that from (I believe) the United States, the reference could have been adapted to mirror the metric system adopted by Australia. There could a reasonable argument offered to plan bus services from housing estates that are some distance from the station, rather than the continued use of vehicles especially where there is inadequate parking close to the station. Mind you there are a wealth of reports generated regarding public transport requirements up to 2036 for the North West Growth Area that would appear to be somewhat incorrect now in 2017 (based on mathematical computations). Yet Government agencies still use these contractors who offered flawed data.

e) Any other related matters.

You only have to look at the North West Metro to see "piecemeal" effort to attempt to overcome planning incompetence covering supplying adequate parking facilities. The original rail line was shown to continue on through the Box Hill Growth Centre (before it was afforded growth centre status) then onto Vineyard Rail Station (shown on all Sydney street directories and, in fact the North West Growth Centre Structure Plan – Edition 3 – the most recent plan until now). This changed late in the planning process and the rail line was diverted to incorporate the Cudgegong Station. Reason being was that there was no place for a 1000 vehicle car park at the Rouse Hill Station so the rail line was changed to allow for parking at the Cudgegong Station site. There was actually ample space (available land) on the western side of the proposed rail line at Rouse Hill for a large multi storey car park but not competent planners able to achieve this.

It is intended for the North West Metro to be extended onto Schofields Rail Station (as a MAJOR interchange) then onto Marsden Park and St Marys (to service Badgerys Creek Airport). Regrettably the failure of State planning authorities to conduct competent and honest planning effort for car parking on the Richmond Rail Line will be magnified in years to come as there would be a need for an even greater level of car parking at the Schofields site (so the site that was supposed to have spaces for 1000 vehicles but only ended up with parking for 230 vehicles will require a capacity well beyond 1000 vehicles).