

**Submission  
No 89**

## **COMMUTER CAR PARKING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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## **Submission to the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales Committee on Transport and Infrastructure Inquiry into commuter car parking in NSW**

*from Philip Laird, University of Wollongong, August 2017*

The submission shall offer general comments on commuter car parking and shall draw on research conducted at the University of Wollongong. However, the submission does not necessarily reflect the views the University.

Overall, it would appear that demand for rail travel within Sydney, and intercity rail travel has increased in recent years. Given population growth, and housing affordability issues in Sydney, this demand is likely to increase. In turn, demand for car parking near stations is likely to increase. Ways to offset this include better provision for secure bicycle parking, and buses to meet the main commuting trains from nearby suburbs with a reasonable population density.

This writer would commend the scheme of paid parking at Perth rail system stations. This scheme was started on 1 July 2014 by the Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, where a modest charge is levied on the SmartRider card, for bone fide train travellers. This scheme was to ration increasingly scarce parking spots and reportedly eased parking.

Incidentally, Perth was the first of Australia's cities in 2007 to introduce integrated smart card ticketing. For Seniors, their SmartRider card was conveniently tied with their Western Australian Seniors card (as opposed to having to carry two cards as still required in NSW).

In 2004, Perth's Northern Suburbs Railway was extended to Clarkson, and in September 2014 it was further extended to Butler - some 40 kilometres from Perth. In 2007, the 72 km Perth Mandurah railway was opened. Along with use of a median freeway strip, further innovative features include relatively few stations to allow for faster train services. Many of these stations have bus interchanges and generous provision for car parking. By way of example, Butler station has spaces for 930 cars.

If this seems generous by New South Wales standards (the exception being Leppington and nearby stations), a new station on the line at Aubin Grove on the Perth Mandurah line (with a related Russell Road upgrade) was opened in April 2017. The new station has approximately 2000 parking bays, and caters for bus feeder services (four bus stands) along with bicycle facilities (for 88 bikes) and connections to local bike paths.

Another example is the Redcliffe Peninsula Line in Queensland officially opened October 2016 by the Prime Minister, the Queensland Premier, and local Mayor. This 12.6 km line, electrified (like Perth modern high voltage 25,000 volts unlike NSW 1500 volts) and double track has six stations, all with generous provision for parking etc. For example, the terminal station Kippa Ring has 400 car spaces.

Given many, if not most, Sydney and interurban stations have severe parking restraints, it would be prudent to improve measures for dropping off passengers (so called kiss and ride) and

for picking up passengers. Some Councils are better than others in catering for this.

The Committee may care to consider a recommendation that each Sydney and interurban station to have, on each side of the tracks used by people to drop off or pick up train passengers, provision for two minute parking, and a space or two for ten or 15 minute parking.

### **Local South Coast issues**

The situation at **Thirroul** is a textbook example of how not to make timetable changes without looking ahead as to parking implications. In 2013, a new timetable was issued with all interurban trains stopping at Thirroul whilst having trains that used to stop at stations such as Bulli, Austinmer and Stanwell Park no longer stopping there. With some local trains having poor connections with the express trains, more and more people went to catch their train at Thirroul.

The impact on streets near the Thirroul railway station was significant. In turn, the pressure on parking adversely affected some retailers in Thirroul. The NSW Government than built a nearby car park, but at a distance far enough from the railway station and requiring pedestrians to cross a busy road, to discourage use of the new car park. For a while, the main use was by teachers at a nearby school, and by skate board riders.

Eventually, Transport for NSW agreed to a trial of some six trains to stop at Austinmer. This was later cut back to three trains. Local people have also asked for the odd commuter express train to stop at Bulli – a station with lifts and platforms long enough for eight car OSCAR trains. This should be possible for Sydney bound trains given the few minutes of timetable slack that sometimes results in trains waiting at Helensburgh.

All express trains now stop at **North Wollongong** and this makes good sense given its proximity (via many feeder buses) to the University of Wollongong. However, commuters using this station certainly deserve better. The last time, the NSW government outlaid money to improve parking at North Wollongong station was in time for the Sydney 2000 Olympics. One possible site for expansion was a property about 2000 sq metres (said years ago to be a bus depot) near North Wollongong station on Porter St. This went to Auction in May 2017 – did Transport for NSW even consider this as an option for more commuter parking?

In 2015, and likely the case now, the number of persons using the North Wollongong station exceeds that of the Thirroul station. Yet Thirroul station has more parking spaces provided on railway land than does North Wollongong. In addition, Thirroul has had for some time electronic indicator boards on all platforms for some years now, whilst requests to date to replace the older more limited manual indicator board by standard electronic indicator screens at the North Wollongong station have been denied to date.

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