

**Submission
No 12**

SYDNEY METRO WEST PROJECT

Organisation: Restore Inner West Line

Date Received: 18 September 2023

Roydon Ng

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]



19 September 2023

Lynda Voltz MP
Chairperson
Legislative Assembly Inquiry for the Sydney Metro West project
via email: transportinfrastructure@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Restore Inner West Line submission for Inquiry into Sydney Metro West

Dear Lynda Voltz MP,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Sydney Metro West project. This submission is made on behalf of the Restore Inner West Line community action group advocates for the interests of the 19,000 commuters from the West of Bankstown area (Lidcombe – Bankstown – Liverpool).

We are delighted to receive news from the NSW Government that Sydney Trains Network services in the West of Bankstown area will not be removed upon the opening of Sydney Metro City & Southwest, and urge Transport for NSW to integrate the opening of Sydney Metro West with further improvements to rail services in the West of Bankstown area especially around Lidcombe and the Cumberland Council area.

a) The original business case for the project

We support additional rail connections and services from Sydney CBD to Greater Western Sydney including the Central River City (Parramatta CBD and the Greater Parramatta Olympic Peninsula area). However, we are disappointed at the lack of business case justification demonstrating proper consideration of a new Sydney Trains heavy rail line versus a new Sydney Metro line.

The claim introduced by the NSW Government in 2014 that single deck Metro could carry more passengers and travel quicker than double-deck Sydney Trains was proven to be doubtful¹.

Any benefits arising from new railway technologies (which are not exclusive to Sydney Metro) such as signalling upgrades could be applied equally to Sydney Trains. This is seen through the Sydney Trains signalling upgrade for the T8 Airport Line and T4 Illawarra Line announced by the NSW Government in 2020 enabling a future capacity of a train every 2 minutes².

Transit orientated development could also be achieved for the catchment areas of Sydney Trains and Sydney Metro lines, hence there appears to be little justification for the introduction of a Metro noted to have less seating and baggage capacity (compared to double-deck Sydney Trains) between Sydney CBD and Westmead (and possibly Western Sydney Airport).

¹ ABC News "Single-decker v double-decker trains: Barry O'Farrell's claim doubtful" (11 April 2014) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-11/barry-ofarrell-sydney-trains-claim-doubtful/5371446>

² St George & Sutherland Shire Leader "First contracts awarded to greatly increase capacity on T4 Illawarra and T8 Airport line s" (25 May 2020) <https://www.theleader.com.au/story/6764995/a-train-every-two-minutes/>

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The full business case (which also ought to be made public) of Sydney Metro West similar to the business cases for other Metro projects in Greater Sydney have failed to examine to impact of investment in comparable Sydney Trains projects and upgrades to deliver the intended benefits to address the need for a new Metro line.

b) The establishment of the route and selection of station locations

Metros are designed to serve higher density areas with frequent stops at stations that are located generally within a kilometre of each other. This has been the design of efficient Metro networks around the world such as in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Europe.

It is unfortunate that the NSW Government appears confused with its understandings of suburban rail, Metro rail, and high speed rail. Metro is not designed to operate as high-speed rail and hence the proposed design of Parramatta to Sydney CBD in 20 minutes on Metro West is a much wasted opportunity to provide new rail access to communities along the corridor.

Notably there are significant gaps along the current Metro West line between Parramatta and Olympic Park, and also Five Dock and The Bays. We support additional Metro West stations at: Silverwater and Lilyfield.

The inclusion of only Olympic Park without a Silverwater Metro West Station near the Cumberland Council area will do little relieve overcrowding on the Sydney Trains Network between Parramatta and Strathfield. It is unrealistic to expect commuters from Lidcombe and surrounding areas to interchange for the T7 Olympic Park sprint train to connect Metro West to Sydney CBD.

c) The cause of blowouts in project cost and timelines

The NSW Government has a responsibility to the public and taxpayers to ensure value for money is achieved across all government spending including major infrastructure projects. We support the finding in the Sydney Metro Review that “acceleration at all costs” should not be pursued³.

It is important that Metro West be delivered even if the inclusion of additional stations results in a delayed opening date beyond 2030. The additional construction time and cost required for the Silverwater and Lilyfield stations will be worthwhile looking into the long-term future transport usage and opportunities in the community arising from the project.

We are of the view that a major reason behind the cost blowout of Sydney Metro projects is the lack of adequate planning from the NSW Government in pursuing too many projects concurrently simply for political positioning at the expense of the NSW Budget.

Much of the shortfall in funding for Metro West could be attributed to budget blowout on the Sydney Metro City & Southwest project, in particularly noting that the conversion of Sydenham to Bankstown has increased from around \$816 million (in 2013⁴) to under \$1 billion (in 2018⁵) to approximately \$10 billion (in 2023⁶).

d) Whether the Minister at the time considered any other consequential benefits that could be achieved from the project

Attention is drawn to the history of the development of railways in NSW often having a close relationship with property developers and influential landowners with prominent connections to the government. Such activities

³ Sydney Metro Independent Review Interim Report Summary (23 June 2023) <https://www.sydneymetro.info/media/document/35771>

⁴ Transport for NSW (GIPA 20T-0909) “[Sydney’s Rail Future Rollout Plan Draft 2 Line-by-line Infrastructure requirements to 2036](#)”

⁵ Internal Transport for NSW estimate provided by Sydney Metro to property developer lobby group “Locals for Metro Southwest”

⁶ Daily Telegraph “[Sydney Metro proposed plan to shut nine train stations permanently after Bankstown-Sydenham Metro lines opens](https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/parramatta/sydney-metro-proposed-plan-to-shut-nine-train-stations-permanently-after-bankstown-sydenham-metro-lines-opens/news-story/3db941e7227c45e3e05a2f0efe5b4699)” (6 September 2023)

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are chronicled in the “Shady Acres”⁷ by Lesly Muir who has investigated into political corruption, developer donations and the impact of powerful lobby groups on the design and construction of Sydney’s metropolitan railway and tramway network in the 19th century.

Every Sydney Metro line corridor to date has been the subject of corruption inquiries related to property development interests of NSW Members of Parliament (or their associates) such as Darryl Maguire (in relation to Sydney Metro Southwest at Canterbury and Campsie as well as Sydney Metro West in relation to Camelia⁸, Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport near the Leppington triangle⁹), John Sidoti (in relation to Sydney Metro Northwest at Rouse Hill and Sydney Metro West at Five Dock¹⁰).

And in the Sydney Metro Southwest project, the then Transport Minister Andrew Constance in 2018 made an exclusive Ministerial video for the property developer¹¹ lobby group¹² “Locals for Metro Southwest”¹³ as part of the group’s launch event on the night of the first day of the public exhibition of the Sydenham to Bankstown Preferred Infrastructure Report.

Therefore it is imperative that NSW Government and external accountability bodies urgently break the cycle of opportunities for impropriety/potential corruption arising from new railway lines and property development along such corridors. Public transport should serve the wider public not the vested interests of a select elite in the government or their associates. It is imperative that all transport projects are designed with the commuter and long-term future of NSW genuinely in mind.

e) Other matters relevant to the Sydney Metro West project

1. T7 Olympic Park line at risk of closure after opening of Sydney Metro West

Internal NSW Government documents have indicated that the Transport for NSW “Sydney to Parramatta Project Control Group” has made considerations to remove Sydney Trains from the T7 Olympic Park Line and for the repurposing of the corridor¹⁴. While this is not currently government policy, it is concerning that access to such an important sporting precinct, commercial, and growing residential peninsula would be limited to one rail line were Sydney Trains to be removed from Olympic Park.

We oppose any plans to remove Sydney Trains from the T7 Olympic Park Line and from the West of Bankstown area. Transport for NSW should urgently restore express Sydney Trains for Lidcombe, Auburn, Granville as well as restore the direct train to City Circle via Inner West Line from all stations in the West of Bankstown area.

⁷ Lesly Muir, “Shady Acres” (2016) <https://www.rahs.org.au/shop/shady-acres-by-lesley-muir/>

⁸ Sydney Morning Herald “‘We have to help our friends’: Daryl Maguire’s property lobbying revealed” (2 August 2018) <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/we-have-to-help-our-friends-daryl-maguire-s-property-lobbying-revealed-20180802-p4zv6t.html>

⁹ Sydney Morning Herald “The airport intersection that is front and centre of the ICAC inquiry” (12 October 2020) <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/the-airport-intersection-that-is-front-and-centre-of-the-icac-inquiry-20201012-p564d6.html>

¹⁰ Daily Telegraph “Labor to demand answers from Sports Minister John Sidoti” (15 September 2019) <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/labor-to-demand-answers-from-sports-minister-john-sidoti/news-story/2f82b112a5a56271bbc86b8de856b9b7>

¹¹ NSW Legislative Assembly Written Questions on Notice “4723 – Meetings by Office of Premier” (12 November 2020) <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/la/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=52886>

¹² ABC News “Grassroots volunteer group Locals for Metro South-West financially backed by Sydney developer” (13 July 2020) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-13/volunteer-group-lms-has-financial-backing-of-developer/12421120>

¹³ NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into Sydenham to Bankstown line conversion “Transcript of Witness: Roydon Ng” (6 November 2010) <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/2250/CORRECTED%20-%20Transcript%20-%20PC%206%20-%20Sydenham-Bankstown%20Line%20Conversion%20-%206%20November%202019.pdf>

¹⁴ Transport for NSW (GIPA 23T-0587) “[Future of T7 Olympic Park Train Line Investigation Draft report February 2018](#)” and “[T7 Olympic Park Line Sydney to Parramatta Project Control Group 1 June 2018](#)”

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We also call on the NSW Government to conduct a feasibility study for implementation of the EcoTransit proposal of Pippita CityExpress¹⁵ including reconstruction of Pippita Station (which has also received the support of Cumberland Council¹⁶ for the project to be investigated further).

2. Investment needed for sextuplication of tracks between Croydon/Homebush and Granville

The Transport for NSW “Sydney’s Rail Future Implementation Plan” (2013) that without an upgrade of the Sydney Trains corridor between Croydon/Homebush and Granville to support the opening of Sydney Metro City & Southwest, it is likely that commuters of southwest Sydney (e.g. Cabramatta, Warwick Farm, Liverpool, and Casula) will see an increase in travel times of 17 minutes to City Circle¹⁷.

The NSW Government also abandoned an internal Transport for NSW proposal for additional tracks on the Sydney Trains Network corridor between Homebush and Granville¹⁸ in 2014 due to WestConnex M4 Stage 1 receiving priority in infrastructure investment. Subsequent attempts to continue the project as part of an upgrade to the T1 Western Line/T2 Inner West Line corridor have also been sidelined by the announcement of Sydney Metro West in 2016.

Reduced overcrowding at Strathfield, Lidcombe, Auburn, Clyde, Granville, and Harris Park through the opening of Metro West will only be short-lived (given the fast growing population and property development in the Cumberland Council area as well as in Parramatta Council area) if genuine investment to upgrade the existing Sydney Trains Network is not undertaken. Given the geographic location of the Metro West being between the existing T1 Western Line and the Parramatta River, the majority of commuters will still be in the catchments of the Sydney Trains Network over Sydney Metro.

The failure to provide additional tracks for Sydney Trains from Croydon/Homebush to Granville is a missed critical opportunity to improve services from Leppington to City Circle via Granville and allow for further additional services from the West of Bankstown area to City Circle via Inner West.

3. Last Mile Transit and Interchange for Sydney Metro commuters

The current lack of Metro West stations will do little to reduce car dependency and ultimately encourage commuters to drive to Metro stations as their proximity to each other serve as centres rather than nodes on the line. It is important that bus services are increased in areas where Metro stations are built not removed as seen with the opening of the Sydney Metro Northwest in 2019.

Active transport must also be a key feature of Sydney Metro projects to connect communities and encourage use of public transport. It is yet to be seen how cyclists and bicycles will interact with other commuters on a mass scale, as such has not been thoroughly tested with Metro Northwest to date given the general direction of travel.

All train and Metro stations where geographically feasible should have at least two entrances to significantly increase the walking and accessibility catchment area. The interchange penalty (both perceived and real time)

¹⁵ EcoTransit “Pippita Centre” <https://ecotransit.org.au/wp/policy-priorities/priority-projects/pippita-centre/>

¹⁶ Cumberland Council Meeting Resolution “Pippita Rail Trail” (21 March 2021)
http://cumberland.infocouncil.biz/Open/2021/03/C_03032021_MIN_2829.htm#PDF2_ReportName_8277

¹⁷ Transport for NSW (GIPA 19T-0072) “[Sydney’s Rail Future Implementation Plan – Opportunities to delay construction of 6 track Croydon to Granville tunnel to 2030’s / 2040’s](#)”

¹⁸ Transport for NSW (GIPA TRA-000628) “[T1-15 Homebush to Granville 6 Track](#)”

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needs to be reduced to a minimum. The design of an integrated public transport system should encourage an overall reduction in car dependency and improve the attractiveness of every mode of public transport.

Metro West should not be encouraging (even unintentionally) current train commuters beyond Westmead to be driving to Westmead Metro station. Bus services and train services to Westmead should be increased to ensure that Westmead does not become a carpark for Metro commuters.

Recommendations

1. Business Cases for all Sydney Metro projects to include cost benefit analysis of an equivalent Sydney Trains project that could deliver the intended results of a new Metro line.
2. Construction of additional Metro West Stations at Silverwater and Lilyfield, with appropriate supporting public transport services (north-south bus routes) and active transport links.
3. Signalling upgrades to the Sydney Trains Network to ensure opening of Sydney Metro projects does not result in degradation of services for existing Sydney Trains commuters (e.g. T7 Olympic Park, Lidcombe – Auburn – Granville, West of Bankstown, southwest Sydney and T2 Leppington Line).
4. Sextuplication of Sydney Trains tracks between Croydon/Homebush and Granville to be prioritised for funding in the next 5 years with construction completed by 2036.
5. NSW Government reconsideration of decision to convert Sydenham to Bankstown into Metro Southwest at a cost of \$10 billion dollars, with the funds to be invested in completing Metro West with additional stations.
6. New public accountability measures to ensure integrity of transport planning to avoid undue influence from property developers/lobbyists including an independent review of the current relationship between land use outcomes of transport infrastructure projects.
7. The Cumberland Council area be consulted further regarding the future of commuter needs and rail services as local commuters have suffered from the most cuts to trains¹⁹ since the 2013 and 2017 timetable were introduced.

We would be glad to give evidence at the Inquiry into the Sydney Metro West project and/or provide further information if required by the Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure.

Thank you for your attention to these matters raised in our submission.

Kind regards,



Roydon Ng

¹⁹ Transport for NSW (GIPA TRA-000529 “2017 More Trains More Services – Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plan” and GIPA TRA-000257 “2013 Customer Timetable – Stakeholder Engagement Plan”) published by Restore Inner West Line community action group at <https://restoreinnerwestline.org.au/cumberland-lga-worse-hit-by-train-cuts/> (21 February 2018)