

**Submission
No 29**

SYDNEY METRO WEST PROJECT

Organisation: Business Western Sydney

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Submission on the Inquiry into Sydney Metro West project

Committee on Transport and Infrastructure

SEPTEMBER 2023



Dear Committee Members,

We appreciate the chance to contribute to the inquiry into Sydney Metro West project.

Business Western Sydney is one of the region's leading not-for-profits representing more than 130 of the region's largest organisations in industry, business, government, and community sectors. Our goal is to support greater public and private investment to boost jobs and to build greater community amenity to make it a better place to live, work, learn and play.

Western Sydney is home to 2.7 million people, a population larger than many Australian states and territories. This large and fast-growing community deserves access to reliable and accessible public transport. A well-functioning public transport system contributes to greater health, economic and environmental outcomes.

We have been a long-time advocate for Sydney Metro West and the catalytic effect it will have as a city-shaping transport project for the corridor between Westmead and Parramatta and the Sydney CBD.

We look forward to Sydney Metro West being completed by 2030 and for this inquiry to provide advice and guidance to the NSW Government on how we can deliver mega-projects better into the future.

We would like to put forward the following issues and recommendations for the Committee to consider:

Maximising metro station opportunities in Western Sydney:

PARRAMATTA METRO STATION

The Parramatta Metro station site provides a once in a generation opportunity to deliberately design a precinct that can provide a vibrant, 24-hour economy and support the development of entertainment culture and the arts.

This precinct provides an opportunity to ensure compatible land uses, including music, entertainment evening and weekend activations in addition to commercial and residential development.

The Parramatta station reference design by the Metro includes two major, large footprint commercial office towers. This no longer seems ideal, considering changes to workplace preferences. There is a greater appetite to deliver high quality commercial offices as part of integrated precincts that also includes retail, public space residential and Civic uses.

The metro west station precinct should be designed deliberately with greater community input.

While a refurbished Roxy Theatre can provide a cultural anchor for the site it should be the starting point in creating a destination with a range of restaurants, cafes bars, music venues and cultural uses. Negative externalities like noise can be minimised through insulation and double glazing, acoustic buffers, and appropriate land uses. Buildings can incorporate immersive digital screens to curate unique events and experiences.

WESTMEAD METRO STATION

Westmead is home to a growing innovation precinct with over 22,000 jobs in health, education, and medical research. It remains however a challenging place to navigate with poor retail activation and pedestrian infrastructure. The metro station site is located with Parramatta light rail and the Westmead heavy rail station. This tight knuckle will be a significant place of arrival to the precinct. It is important that these significant trip generators are well integrated and that there is a focus on creating great public space in this area.

Greater community consultation when planning transport infrastructure:

High quality, genuine community consultation leads to better outcomes. These initiatives are complex and often require significant resources, expertise, and funding. By involving the community, government officials can gain valuable insights into local needs, concerns, and priorities, ensuring that the project aligns with the best interests of the people it serves.

We believe that the former government could have consulted with communities along the Sydney Metro West corridor more thoroughly. Better identifying local needs and possible opportunities mitigates against negative impacts. Transparent and inclusive consultation builds trust between government and the community.

Better identifying what problem this project was aiming to solve at the beginning would have helped the government decide where stations should have been located and would have built public support when budgets inevitably run over.





The benefits of collaborating with the private sector:

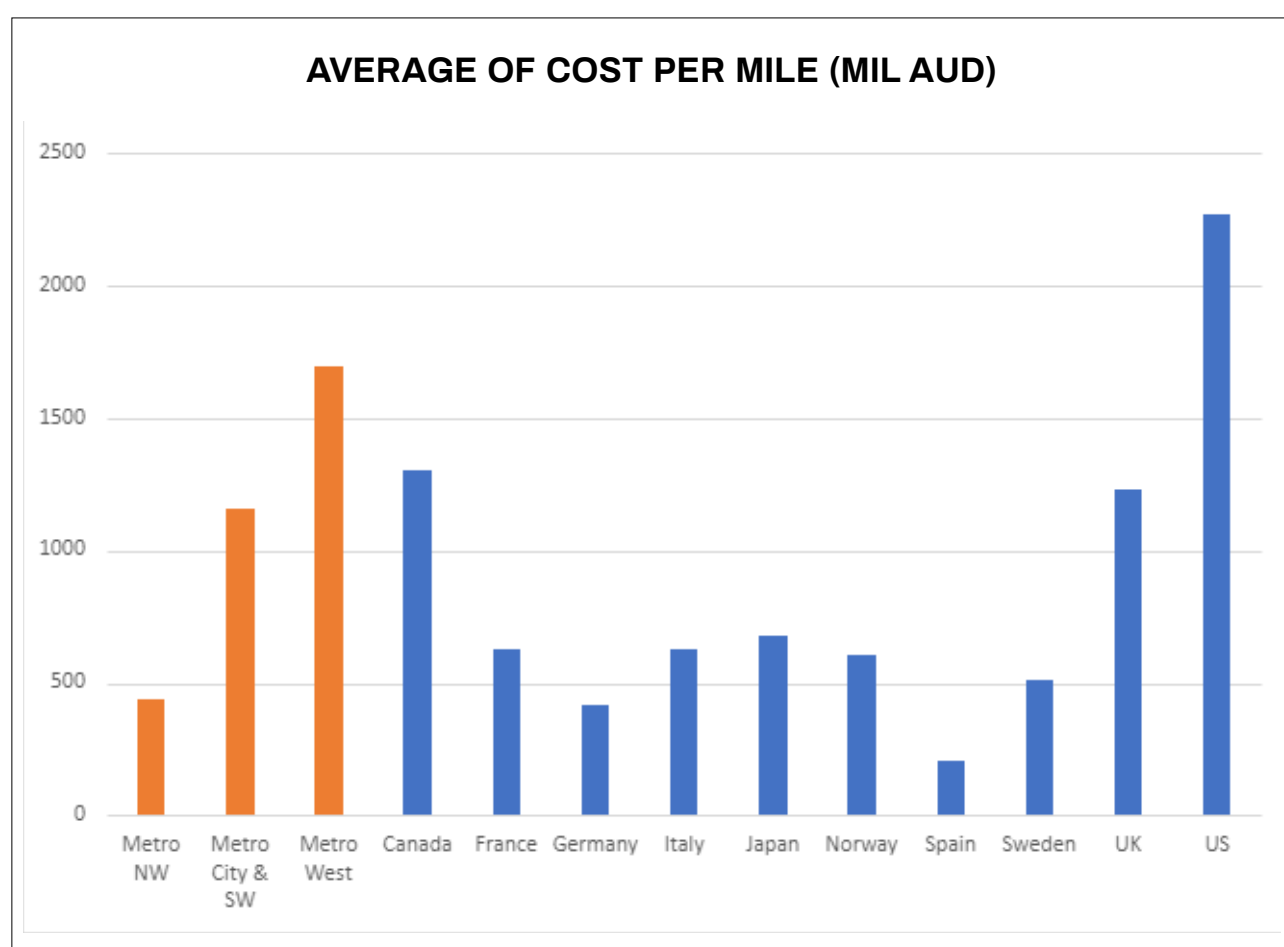
We strongly believe that there needs to be greater transparency between Government and the private sector when scoping and planning transport infrastructure. These large projects demand substantial financial resources, specialised technical knowledge, and efficient project management. Partnering with the private sector not only provides access to additional expertise but can also foster innovation, resulting in more cost-effective solutions.

By involving industry stakeholders from the outset, governments can avoid expensive mistakes and unnecessary duplication of geotechnical and community studies. Collaboration can also lead to more efficient project planning and delivery reducing the likelihood of costly delays or design flaws later in the process.

Private sector participation can also help governments manage financial risks, share the burden, and improve overall project cost-effectiveness, like in the case of Martin Place Metro Station. Ultimately, this collaborative approach ensures that large transport infrastructure projects are not only well-conceived but also successfully executed, benefiting both the public and private sectors.

Project Planning and Business Case Development

Sydney Metro West highlights the increasing cost of delivering major infrastructure projects in NSW and across Australia. On a cost per kilometre basis (inflation - and exchange-rate adjusted), Metro West will cost more than four times the average Metro project in Germany and Spain, and three times France, Japan, and the Nordic countries (see figure).



Data from Transit Costs Project of the NYU Marron Institute of Urban Management and Britain Remade, via Datawrapper. Additional analysis by Business NSW. datawrapper.dwcdn.net/MYoQk/5/

Improving the efficiency of major infrastructure delivery is vital in meeting NSW's economic objectives. The more expensive one infrastructure project becomes the more likely that other projects will be deferred or cancelled, which in turn makes the NSW economy less productive. Cost overruns risk a breakdown in trust between government and the community and weaken the social licence to commit to large scale future projects.

Infrastructure Australia and Infrastructure NSW have emphasised the importance of best practice in developing business cases and proper project evaluation and planning. We support those recommendations.¹ More time spent on planning is not time wasted – on the contrary project planning helps reduce the risk of costly financial and time blowouts.

Cost estimates should be prepared with reference to real world projects with similar characteristics. No project will be an exact analogue, but project cost estimates based on real-world comparisons will provide a more realistic estimate and be less susceptible to optimistic forecasts. Standardised and modular construction methods are more likely to deliver on-time and on-budget outcomes than requiring extensive bespoke design. Using experienced contractors who have a track record of delivering similar projects helps reduce the risk of overruns and mismanagement.²

Our parent organisation, Business NSW, will be exploring these issues further in a forthcoming report. We will be pleased to share it with the committee when it is available.

¹ <https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/publications/assessment-framework>

² See Flyvbjerg and Gardner; *How Big Things Get Done*, for a fuller exploration of these issues.





The opportunity of additional metro stations:

We believe that the decision not to build more stations between Parramatta and Olympic Park is a missed opportunity.

Additional stations at sites such as Camellia, Rosehill or Silverwater present an opportunity to develop a significant number of new homes and jobs at scale. Just as Homebush Bay was transformed from an old industrial site into Sydney Olympic Park, these locations could be transformed by Sydney Metro West.

Greater consultation with the community and collaboration with the private sector in the planning phase may have identified this opportunity. Better information sharing by NSW Government agencies into why these locations were dismissed in the planning process and an opportunity for this to be tested and critiqued by other experts would be valuable and potentially lead to different outcomes.

As Sydney's housing crisis continues to grow, these additional stations would be an unprecedented opportunity to build master planned transport-oriented development at scale.

Continue to Expand the Sydney Metro:

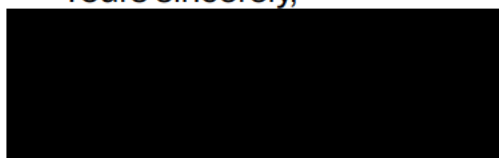
We have developed a strong capability to deliver metro rail lines in our city. We need to ensure we do not lose this capability by developing a responsible and timely pipeline of additional Sydney Metro rail lines over the coming decades. We need to plan and expand the Sydney Metro Western Sydney Airport line to improve connectivity with the network to the north and south and plan for future metros through Parramatta and Western Sydney.

Through our consultation with our sister chambers, exploring the opportunities for stations at sites such as Moore Park and Green Square for a future eastern extension of Sydney Metro West is also a recommendation.

Conclusion

Thank you for considering our submission. I look forward to the Committee's findings and the positive changes they will bring to planning and building public transport. I would be delighted to appear before the committee to discuss on of these issues in more detail.

Yours sincerely,



David Borger
Executive Director
Business Western Sydney



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

David Borger
Executive Director
Business Western Sydney

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