

**Submission
No 36**

**CRITICAL TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORTING THE WESTERN
SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND WESTERN SYDNEY
AEROTROPOLIS**

Organisation: Transport Workers' Union of New South Wales

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Submission

***Inquiry into critical transport infrastructure supporting the Western Sydney
International Airport and Western Sydney Aerotropolis***

4/04/2024

Transport Workers' Union of New South Wales



Transport Workers' Union of NSW

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1. Summary of Recommendations

1.1 The Transport Workers' Union of NSW (TWU) believes that now is the time to get things right. In the lead up to the opening of the Western Sydney International Airport, there is opportunity to reflect upon the failings of existing public transport infrastructure and practices, as well as those in road transport and logistics.

1.2 Below is a summary of the TWU's key recommendations for this inquiry, which are elaborated on and contextualised within this submission. The Western Sydney International Airport, and related precincts, should consider;

- Good rest areas for bus drivers to park their vehicles;
- Bus rest areas to be well equipped, hosting exclusive use bathrooms, meal rooms, and other necessary amenities;
- Dedicated bus lanes (where suitable) on the routes to, from and between the Western Sydney International Airport, Aerotropolis and other related precincts;
- Reflect upon the historically disproportionate allocation of public transport budget impacting the overall quality of buses; services running Western Sydney International Airport (and related) routes must be adequately invested towards;
- Good rest areas / a marshalling area for trucks to comfortably park their vehicles and rest;
- Similarly to buses, truck driver rest areas should be well-appointed with bathrooms, meal rooms and other necessary amenities;
- Consideration of trucks carting dangerous goods, such as the aircraft fuel that will be trucked into the Airport, and where they can safely park their vehicles; learn from the failings of other key gateways, such as Port Botany; and
- Further consultation with the TWU and relevant delegates, to determine avenues in which certain pieces of infrastructure can be integrated with existing plans, and other important matters.

2. About the TWU

2.1 The TWU represents tens of thousands of people in Australia's road transport, aviation, oil, waste management, gas, passenger vehicle and freight logistics industries.

2.2 With over one hundred years' experience representing the workers who conduct Australia's crucial passenger and freight transport tasks, the TWU has been proactive in advocating for the establishment and improvement of industry standards which advance the lives and safety of transport workers, their families and the community at large.



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3. Introduction

- 3.1 The TWU welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the *'Inquiry into critical transport infrastructure supporting the Western Sydney International Airport and Western Sydney Aerotropolis'*.
- 3.2 By virtue of a long-standing representational history of transport workers, the TWU is uniquely positioned to comment on the relevant transport infrastructure needs for the upcoming Western Sydney International Airport, and related precincts. As a key piece of the Western Sydney puzzle, the upcoming International Airport will serve as a gateway for travelers coming from afar, and naturally, will involve the provision of public transport services and other logistics-based tasks.
- 3.3 As essential workers who provide important services to the public, transport workers are at the forefront of the TWU's concerns. It is crucial that the bus services being provided for the Western Sydney International Airport, and the Aerotropolis, as well as surrounding areas, are being prioritized and invested towards in an equitable capacity.
- 3.4 Additionally, road transport will be playing a significant role in the Western Sydney International Airport's operations, especially in the years following the official opening in 2026. Among other capacities, it has officially been determined that the delivery of aircraft fuel to the new airport will be carried out by trucks, in the undetermined length of time before dedicated fuel lines are introduced. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge the needs of trucks, in reference to the airport's infrastructure plans.

4. Context Relevant for Buses

- 4.1 To properly address the terms of reference outlined for the inquiry, the TWU finds it necessary to provide a background summary into the nature of the bus sector, and more specifically, the characteristics associated with the role of a bus driver. Only by taking these factors into consideration can there be an adequate analysis on transport infrastructure needs for the Western Sydney International Airport and Aerotropolis.
- 4.2 In summary, the provision of bus services, as a mode of public transport, has been thrown to the wayside in favour of the development of Sydney Metro, and other initiatives. This has been reflected through a disproportionate level of funding, attention, and general interest on part of the NSW Government for an extended period of time. The TWU's concern is that the bus services purposed for the Western Sydney International Airport, and related areas, will be subject to the same treatment.
- 4.3 During financial year 2022-2023, overall patronage on public transport indicated that buses were the second most utilised mode of public transport, with a recorded total of 261,251,595 instances of passenger trips. Comparatively, trains, which saw the highest level of patronage, were not ahead by a significant margin, recording a total of 288,293,926 instances of passenger trips¹. From the total number of recorded trips made with all modes of public

¹ Transport for NSW Annual Report. Volume 1 | 2022-23. NSW Government.



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transport, buses saw about 41.9% of total patronage.

- 4.4 Despite such a significant level of patronage, buses are afforded (up to) a mere 3% of the transport budget spend, in comparison to other modes of public transport². Therefore, it may be fair to conclude that the disproportionate level of investment towards buses can be considered inequitable, and it is this low-level of investment that has the sector struggling; bus driver retention is difficult, and the recruitment of new drivers is hardly any easier.
- 4.5 The TWU raises this as public transport will be, and judging from released materials, is intended be on part of the NSW Government, a key method of moving travelers to, from and between the Western Sydney International Airport and connected areas. The idea that this is the NSW Government's preferred method is also supported by the clear interest in reducing car usage. As such, there must be an appropriate level of funding and attention towards the provision of bus services, in addition to other modes, such as the Sydney Metro.
- 4.6 In reference to the aforementioned lack of funding, specific areas within New South Wales' bus task are suffering the consequences. A key issue that negatively impacts the experience of bus drivers on a daily basis is the lack of suitable bathroom facilities when on the job. It is all too common to find that bus routes have been allocated where a designated bathroom isn't immediately available at layover areas. In some instances, drivers may stop where they have been advised to as per their route, but the actual bathroom would take 10 minutes to reach – a timeframe that remains entirely unpractical given the periods allowed for a driver's rest break.
- 4.7 Though that is just a generalised example based on the TWU's experience in its history of representing bus drivers, this reality has been recognised through official avenues, such as the first report of the NSW Bus Industry Taskforce, where it is reflected that the conditions of bathrooms are poor, and it is often the case that access is an issue altogether³.

5. Context Relevant for Trucks & Road Transport

- 5.1 Transport is considered one of the deadliest industries in Australia, if not the deadliest. Though the banner of "transport" extends far and wide, truck driving in particular is a dangerous task, made even more so with the risks involved in fuel cartage.
- 5.2 Fatigue management is a practice that is commonly pushed by the NSW Government, as well as relevant entities in the industry, and for good reason. Fatigue is a serious safety hazard that is undisputed in every capacity, and remains a leading contributor to road crashes in trucking⁴. Fatigue is especially important in the context of road transport, considering that the nature of driving a truck involves prolonged hours with a need for full attention.
- 5.3 Despite the very-well acknowledged reality of fatigue in transport, in the TWU's long history

² Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and the Arts. 2024. Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio area.

³ NSW Bus Industry Taskforce – First Report (2023). *Transport for NSW*.

⁴ Ren, X., et al. (2023). Factors associated with Fatigued Driving among Australian Truck Drivers: A Cross-Sectional Study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(3), p.2732.



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of representing truck drivers, there have been many lived experiences where truck drivers are unable to practice proper fatigue management, typically due to circumstances beyond their own control.

- 5.4 Truck drivers are required to practice a certain level of fatigue management under the National Heavy Vehicle Law. Section 228(1) of the National Heavy Vehicle Law states that a heavy vehicle driver has a duty to avoid driving while fatigued; *'A person must not drive a fatigue-regulated heavy vehicle on a road while the person is impaired by fatigue.'*
- 5.5 There are also a set of rest requirements that heavy vehicle drivers must also adhere to under the National Heavy Vehicle Law. For example, a driver must have (at least) 15 continuous minutes of rest time if they have worked for 5¼ hours without rest, under Section 252(1a). Drivers also record this information in their work diaries, meaning that the periods they are driving on the road, and then resting, are meant to be reflected accurately in official logs.
- 5.6 The TWU would point to a currently lived situation for dangerous goods drivers in New South Wales. At Port Botany, a key logistics gateway in Sydney, there is currently no area where a dangerous goods truck can stop and rest with proper passage. Even the "truck marshalling area" at Port Botany does not allow for the parking of dangerous goods trucks, with a sign explicitly stating "NO HAZARDOUS GOODS ON SITE".
- 5.7 In the experience of members, they are left with a choice; roam the streets around the port in the hopes of finding street parking to fit their dangerous goods truck for rest (which often is just not an option due to road parking restrictions, size limitations of a truck, and the limitations of street capacity), baring in mind the fact they are carting a hazardous load, or simply risk driving illegally where they cannot fulfill their rest requirements under National Heavy Vehicle Law.
- 5.8 Simply put, a key problem faced by dangerous goods drivers is a lack of suitable parking spaces and rest areas appropriate for their trucks. This is especially relevant for the Western Sydney International Airport, considering it has been explicitly stated that trucks will be carting in aircraft fuel, as opposed to relying on fuel lines for an underdetermined amount of time following the airport's opening.

6. Options for Transport Infrastructure

- 6.1 As the Western Sydney International Airport and relevant precincts are still in development, now is the perfect opportunity to plan ahead and ensure that the provision of public transport services is done right, from the onset. As such, the TWU will make recommendations based on what may prove to be most beneficial for the delivery of quality bus services, with the satisfaction of both the passenger and the driver themselves, along with positive effects on integration with road traffic, if not overall reduction.
- 6.2 To prevent issues associated with a lack of suitable facilities, the Western Sydney International Airport should be equipped with a well-appointed layover area for bus drivers to park their vehicles and take a break. Additionally, bathrooms must be accessible at these layover areas, within a reasonable distance. Ideally, to avoid any problems with accessibility,



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there should be bathrooms specifically designated for bus drivers alone.

- 6.3 A particularly beneficial piece of road infrastructure that should be considered would be the dedication of bus lanes on routes to, from and between the airport, where suitable. Naturally, it is impractical to have bus lanes across an entire route. However, in key areas within the Western Sydney International Airport's network, a dedicated bus lane can yield a number of benefits. Offset bus lanes can help deliver more efficient services through allowing a bus to move more freely and avoid congestion, and can also reduce interruptions caused by a bus on other vehicles.
- 6.4 Moreover, a bus lane will make journeys more enjoyable for passengers by virtue of less interruptions, and a smoother experience. Similarly, this eased experience will also prove beneficial for the bus driver themselves, who are already burdened with a number of different stressors both on the job and in the background.
- 6.5 Similarly to buses, consideration should be given to a designated rest area for truck drivers carting loads to and from the Western Sydney International Airport. This would naturally include parking spaces generous enough to contain a number of trucks at any given time, as well as dedicated bathroom and rest facilities.
- 6.6 There is an opportunity to give truck drivers the best possible convenience in managing their fatigue, by providing a rest area that is available at the same site where a truck is loading. Again, the TWU would reference the unhospitable conditions faced by dangerous goods drivers at Port Botany, and would urge for the Western Sydney International Airport to not make the same mistakes.
- 6.7 If the Western Sydney International Airport is to actively host dangerous goods trucks that are carting aircraft fuel, then the airport must provide facilities that will facilitate said trucks, as well as any that are not considered dangerous goods". This is especially necessary for any drivers that happen to be doing long-distance runs, and needing to comply with their work diary through National Heavy Vehicle Law.
- 6.8 Regarding the integration of these suggestions with existing transport infrastructure, it would be beneficial if further discussion could take place between the TWU and relevant parties. Currently, the TWU is not entirely informed with all relevant planning factors associated with transport infrastructure at the Western Sydney International Airport. To provide the best possible insights, further consultation would be needed, and is openly encouraged.

7. Reducing road usage around the new airport and surrounding regions

- 7.1 As highlighted previously, buses can play an integral part in reducing overall road usage around the new airport, particularly in unison with the Sydney Metro. The best way for buses to serve as a means of reducing road usage is for services to be of a high quality, meaning that adequate investment and attention must be turned towards its provision as a key mode of public transport.
- 7.2 Over the years, studies have reflected that public transport can indeed reduce the number of



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vehicles on the road, leading to a multitude of benefits including, but not limited to, traffic reduction, mitigation of air pollution, as well as safety⁵. However, in order for public transport to be an enticing option for travelers, the quality of services must be of a suitable standard.

7.3 Generally speaking, this would mean that a suitable level of financial investment, as well as overall attention on part of the NSW Government, must be directed towards the bus services that would run the Western Sydney International Airport routes, as well as the routes of associated gateways and precincts. Again, the TWU would refer to the aforementioned transport budget facts, and would urge the NSW Government to consider the importance of increasing financial investment towards the services of the Western Sydney International Airport.

7.4 The TWU has consistently argued that in order to achieve a high-standard of bus services, bus drivers must be treated accordingly. In its experience with bus drivers, a very common complaint and interference in relation to work are the aforementioned issues associated with bathroom usage and access. If buses are to deliver a high-standard of service for travelers, then it is necessary for bus drivers to be satisfied as well.

7.5 Ultimately, how to best work around these complexities is a multi-layered process that would best be conducted with meaningful consultation between the TWU, Transport for NSW and relevant Western Sydney International Airport personnel. Of course, the TWU encourages consultation in good faith, with the sincere belief that equitable investment towards services, and consideration towards the needs of bus drivers, can eventually facilitate reductions in road usage and create healthy roads for the Western Sydney International Airport.

8. **Conclusion**

8.1 The TWU would like to thank the Committee on Transport and Infrastructure for holding this Inquiry, as it is a necessary step towards creating a well-appointed transport system for the Western Sydney International Airport.

8.2 For clarity, below is a summary of the TWU's key recommendations for this inquiry. The Western Sydney International Airport, and related precincts, should consider;

- Good rest areas for bus drivers to park their vehicles;
- Bus rest areas to be well equipped, hosting exclusive use bathrooms, meal rooms, and other necessary amenities;
- Dedicated bus lanes (where suitable) on the routes to, from and between the Western Sydney International Airport, Aerotropolis and other related precincts;
- Reflect upon the historically disproportionate allocation of public transport budget impacting the overall quality of buses; services running Western Sydney International

⁵ Nguyen-Phuoc, D.Q., et al. (2020). Traffic congestion relief associated with public transport: state-of-the-art. *Public Transport*, 12.



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Airport (and related) routes must be adequately invested towards;

- Good rest areas / a marshalling area for trucks to comfortably park their vehicles and rest;
- Similarly to buses, truck driver rest areas should be well-appointed with bathrooms, meal rooms and other necessary amenities;
- Consideration of trucks carting dangerous goods, such as the aircraft fuel that will be trucked into the Airport, and where they can safely park their vehicles; learn from the failings of other key gateways, such as Port Botany; and
- Further consultation with the TWU and relevant delegates, to determine avenues in which certain pieces of infrastructure can be integrated with existing plans, and other important matters.