

Response to Question from The Hon. Lynda Voltz on the capacity of the rail way line that is being built to Epping.

NSROC has no specific information relating to the capacity of the Epping line, but repeated reporting in the media states the line will be constrained to four (4) trains per hour because of existing congestion on the Northern Line.

An example of such reporting is to be found on the Railpage Australia website (<http://www.railpage.com.au/news-5795.htm>) which quotes the following Sydney Morning Herald article:

A GOVERNMENT plan to make Macquarie Park the fourth-largest CBD in Australia, behind Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, may be undermined by the NSW cabinet's decision to dump the North West Rail Link. Billions of dollars are being spent in turning the growing area into Australia's answer to Silicon Valley, with technology businesses setting up next door to an expanding Macquarie University.

The key to the corridor's development is the Epping to Chatswood Rail Line, which will offer 30-minute train journeys into the Sydney CBD. **But only four trains an hour will service the \$2.3 billion train line in the foreseeable future because the Government dumped its promised CityRail extension to Rouse Hill, converting it into an independent metro line.**

A masterplan for the area just released by Ryde City Council shows it had expected to shift 40 per cent of local journeys on to public transport. "The Epping to Chatswood Rail Line, which will have two stations within Macquarie Park ... will have the capacity to carry some 23,400 commuters in the one hour peak (subject to the completion of the North West Rail Link from Epping to Rouse Hill and the CBD Rail Link from Chatswood to Epping)," the document reads.

But now there will only be enough trains to transport a combined 8000 commuters in both directions in the one-hour peak.

It could be a particularly pressing problem for the Transport Minister, John Watkins, because the business and technology area is within his own electorate of Ryde. Yesterday he told the Herald that more trains would be added as needed. While there is capacity for up to 20 trains an hour through Macquarie Park, there is insufficient room on the network to send more than four trains an hour down the new line from Hornsby. Under the Government's former rail plan the extra trains would have come from Rouse Hill via the North West Rail Link, boosting the number of trains to as many as 16 an hour.

Since 2002, Ryde council has been planning for growth because the State Government had placed Macquarie Park at the heart of its employment strategy. "If the anticipated growth in Macquarie Park is achieved, it will become the fourth-largest business district in Australia by the mid-21st century, larger than the CBDs of Adelaide or Perth," the masterplan reads.

Macquarie University is also pressing ahead with a large-scale campus expansion. "The rail mode is expected to attract between 21 and 23 per cent of the trips depending on the time of day," says the university's concept plan. "There will be up to eight trains an hour servicing the stations in the Macquarie Park area. This has the potential to be increased further if the North West Rail Link from Epping to Castle Hill and Rouse Hill is constructed.

"This link will increase the service frequency at Macquarie Park stations by running trains direct from Rouse Hill to Sydney CBD via Macquarie Park." Optus has moved 6000 of its 10,000-strong national workforce to the suburb, with plans for 40 per cent of its employees to travel by public transport.

This equates to almost 2500 people, most of whom will be travelling in the morning peak. If just half of these people switch to the train when the line opens next year, it could soak up 25 per cent of the line's citybound capacity. Mr Watkins said extra services would be added as required.