

Submission
No 147

THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR

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SUBMISSION TO UPPER HOUSE INQUIRY INTO TRANSPORT FACILITIES
IN THE NORTH WEST SECTOR

From Laura Baird

(local resident of Baulkham hills Shire Council)

My family resides in a lovely area within Metropolitan Sydney (north west); peaceful yet vibrant, modern facilities and parks, but even though it was recently just voted as one of the best local areas to live in, the one thing that grieves the community around us is the lack of public transport.

I have a pamphlet "Action for Transport - 2010" which states a commitment from the then Labor State Government that a rail line will be completed from Epping to Castle Hill by 2010. This has obviously been delayed or cancelled. Earlier this year these plans were to construct a Metro-line to commence in 2010 and be completed by 2015. Research that has been presented suggests that a metro-line is not the best option past Epping, will be extremely expensive to build, with suggestions us commuters will be 'hit' with a much higher ticket cost than the rest of metro Sydney rail commuters, it will lead to further congestion at Epping station and in fact to some extent decreases the efficiency of this new line by decreasing the number of trains running along it.

Whilst there has been the welcome provision of City bus services in recent years, these are in themselves quite limiting. We still need to drive to local bus stops to catch these buses because very few drive along our local main arterial road (Gilbert Rd, Glenhaven), as the desire and need for public transport in this area increases the buses are overflowing, our closest bus takes the longer route through Castle Hill & Baulkham Hills and takes 1 ½ to 1 ¾ hrs to arrive in Sydney. Therefore, we utilise the quicker and easier bus route 642 from either Dural or Oakhill shops (both 7 min. drives away with no designated parking areas). These buses run frequently during peak hours, but only every 1 or 2 hours during the day. Whilst there are designated buses lanes along the M2, there are not along the peripheral roads which are often clogged with peak hour traffic. Therefore one must leave much earlier than required to ensure arriving at your destination on time.

My daughter attends university in the city. One would think that the ideal place to study and travel to. However, originally she tried the city bus and found she was often late for class due to local traffic congestion prior to entering the M2. Also a major problem is travelling back home during the middle of the day as mentioned previously. The cost is higher than trains and there is no weekly discount.

Consequently she now catches the northern train line. It takes her 40 minutes to travel to the nearest train station either Pennant Hills or Beecroft and park, both are only 8 km away, followed by the 40 min train ride. My second daughter will be faced with the same challenge next year. My husband is based out at McGraths Hill and would easily be able to catch the train line out there, if it were constructed.

Consequently, as the English researcher recently implied we are 'married to our cars', not because we want to be, but because we have no other means of even accessing the limited transport available to us. Like many households around us we now have 4 cars in our household, obviously at considerable expense in this current economic climate, as well as contributing to Green house emissions.

We realise we live in "blue ribbon electorate" and this does not appear to hold much importance for the previous and current Labor State Governments. However, politics was not the reason we choose to live in this area. It has been a great place to raise our family and still is a great place to live. The problems with transport have become more evident as our children have grown up and rely on public transport to access work, University and social activities (being responsible for safe driving issues etc). Whilst they attended school bus services were adequate.

Like many families, my husband and I have worked very hard all our working lives (as have our children since eligible) for ourselves and our country, contributing our share of taxes and to the lifestyle of this great State. We feel discriminated against that we sense we are not receiving our share back, in the provision of suitable and efficient public transport, whilst there is suggestion of augmenting already existing public transport in other areas. Further, if we do have to access the city via personal car and the M2, we are slugged with hefty toll fees with no 'cashback system' in place, although commuters along the M4 and M5 have received this benefit for years.