

**Submission  
No 117**

## **THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF SYDNEY'S NORTH-WEST SECTOR**

**Name:** Mr Benjamin Kelly

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NSW Parliament Legislative Council  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4

**Re: transport needs of Sydney's North-West Sector**

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am a resident of Sydney's North West and wish to make the following submission.

**1.0 Need for Inquiry**

I am somewhat perplexed as to why this inquiry is taking place. Premier lemma has announced that a metro rail link will be built to the North West and that the first trains will be operating between the Hills Centre and Epping by 2015 and that metros will be running between Rouse Hill and Sydney by 2017. In radio interviews Premier lemma repeatedly stated that metro was fully costed and that its funding was not dependant on the sale of power assets.

**2.0 The Need for a Rail Link**

**2.1 Lost Productivity**

I am the Manager of a small contracting business that employs approximately 10 people. We specialise in the service and installation of commercial refrigeration systems. We are typical of thousands of small businesses that operate throughout the Sydney area.

We are constantly told by economist and politicians that the key to improved standards of living and greater economic prosperity is through improving productivity. Sadly poor infrastructure means that thousands of hours of productive time is lost by our mechanics sitting in traffic jams on the way to and

from service calls. The loss of productivity is estimated to cost our business thousands of dollars a year.

The problem is exacerbated by the skills shortage and high fuel prices. There is a dire shortage of experienced Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanics (this has been recognised by Federal and State Governments in studies identifying areas of skills shortages). If the mechanics that were available could spend a greater portion of their day working productively rather than sitting idle in traffic jams it would go some way towards relieving pressures associated with the skills shortage – logically if each business loses 10% productive time due to travel time it means that 10% more mechanics are required to complete the same volume of work. Poor infrastructure means that the limited amount of skilled labour available in the Australian economy is not being employed productively.

Given that we are just one of thousands of small businesses the total cost to the economy must be tens or hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

## **2.2 The Direct Human Cost of Car Use**

According to the NSW RTA there were 388 fatalities and 24,994 casualties resulting from motor vehicle accidents in NSW for the 12 month period ending September, 2008

([www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/downloads/dynamic/monthly-accident-data.pdf](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/downloads/dynamic/monthly-accident-data.pdf)).

Travel by motor vehicle is an inherently unsafe means of travel. Despite improvements in safety features of motor vehicles (such as air bags and seat belts) and massive amounts spent by government on motor vehicle safety campaigns and policing, the statistics tell the story -388 fatalities and nearly 25,000 casualties is simply unacceptable. A motor vehicle driven by an experienced driver, not speeding, not under the influence of alcohol or drugs and not fatigued is still an inherently dangerous form of transport. We are all human beings and as such are prone to lapses of concentration and distractions. Despite the best efforts to educate them to the contrary children are prone to run onto roads without adequately checking it is safe to do so.

### The Hierarchy of Controls

Following is a reproduction of the Hierarchy of Controls, which is published by Workcover NSW. It is a tool used in the Management of Hazards that may result in injury or illness in the workplace.

1. Remove the hazard completely—(Elimination)
2. Separate people from the hazard—(Substitution).
3. Use an engineered control—(Isolation)
4. Change work practices
5. Provide Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

The hierarchy of controls lists from best (ie. Elimination) to worst (ie. Use of personal protective equipment) the available controls for managing hazards.

As stated above the statistics clearly demonstrate that despite the improvements in motor vehicle design and massive amounts spent on road safety campaigns and policing, far too many people are killed or injured as a result of motor vehicle accidents. This clearly demonstrates that motor vehicle travel is an inherently unsafe means of transport (for both the occupant(s) of the vehicle and other members of the community such as pedestrians and cyclists).

Why in spite of the massive amounts spent on road safety campaigns and policing are hundreds of people killed and thousands of people injured each year on NSW roads – simple all of these campaigns are aimed at changing behaviours (ie. Not driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, not speeding, not driving while fatigued etc). With reference to the hierarchy of controls this would equate to a level 4 control (ie. Change in work practices). So far as risk management is concerned it is always better to eliminate the risk. In terms of motor vehicle use this means simply that we have to reduce our dependence on motor vehicles as our means of transport.

By failing to provide public transport options the NSW Government is forcing citizens to travel by motor vehicle which the RTA's statistics demonstrate are resulting in the death and injury of far too many people. If the NSW government was serious about curbing the number of deaths and injuries resulting from motor vehicle use they would be implementing measures that would be reducing motor vehicle use (ie. Eliminating the hazard according to the hierarchy of controls). By failing to provide viable alternative options and forcing its citizens to depend on private motor vehicle use to some degree the NSW Government is complicit in the death and injury of its citizens.

### **2.3 The Indirect Cost**

Aside from the direct cost associated with death and injury resulting from motor vehicle accidents there is an indirect cost born due to air pollution resulting from motor vehicle use.

In an interview with Epidemiologist Professor Tony McMichael of the Australian National University's National Centre for Epidemiology and Public Health a statement was made to the effect of "the number of deaths resulting from air pollution associated with motor vehicle use is equal to the number of deaths resulting from motor vehicle accidents". Whilst it remains difficult to quantify the exact numbers and costs of death and illness associated with poor air quality resulting from motor vehicle use there is clearly a large indirect health cost. Furthermore there are quality of life issue for vulnerable persons (ie. Asthmatics and people with respiratory diseases).

## **2.4 Equity and Social Justice**

In order to play a productive part in our society and live a fulfilling life it is necessary for people to be able to travel. Access to education and employment opportunities are directly correlated with a person's ability to travel.

Private motor vehicle travel is expensive, the initial cost of the motor vehicle together with the ongoing running, insurance and repair costs means that significant financial resources are required to purchase and maintain a motor vehicle. The problem is exacerbated by the afore mentioned high price of petrol. In a report I have read by the NRMA the cost of running a motor vehicle is estimated at \$200 per week (ie. \$10,400 per year). The high cost of running a motor vehicle means that not all members of society have access to this means of transport. Given the inadequacy of public transport and the car dependant nature of transport in the North West (as demonstrated by statistics demonstrating one of the highest rates of motor vehicles owned per household in Australia) it follows that people without the financial means to purchase and run a motor vehicle are precluded from opportunities that they may otherwise have.

Additionally there are certain sections of the public that are not able to drive due to disability, medical conditions (ie. Epilepsy), and age. The lack of viable public transport options is an obstacle to such persons living productive and fulfilling lives.

## **2.5 Economic Considerations and Resource Conservation**

As recent trends have shown the price of oil in the longer term is only likely to go in one direction owing to increasing demand from China and India and limited opportunities for increased production. The high cost of petrol is placing a huge financial burden on families and businesses.

Oil is after all a finite resource and its use as a fuel contributes to global climate change. Economic instruments aimed at reducing carbon pollution are likely to further increase the price of petrol.

In the longer term the increasing price of oil will reduce the viability of private motor vehicle transport and exacerbate the issues raised above regarding equity and social justice. Some degree of foresight would indicate that we need to plan ahead for a carbon constrained future and a future where high oil prices are likely to limit the viability of private motor vehicle travel.

## **3.0 Conclusion**

The lack of viable public transport options is placing a huge burden on the citizens of the North West. Due to the issues raised above any transport strategy for the North West of Sydney must aim to reduce the dependency on private motor vehicle use. It is beyond my expertise to assert the exact nature and type of public transport system required, however I believe that some form of rail system such as the proposed metro rail or a traditional heavy rail system would be a step in the right direction. The North West desperately needs a rail link (in fact I would argue that one was required 20 years ago), be it heavy or light rail is a matter for experts.

In my life I have had the good fortune to live in London and Singapore. In both of these cities I did not own a motor vehicle because good public transport systems made it viable to function as a member of society without the need for owning a motor vehicle. I sincerely wish that I did not have to own a motor vehicle for economic and environmental reasons, however the lack of public transport options in the North West of Sydney simply means that there is no practical alternative.

The time for Parliamentary Inquiries and such is long past. We desperately want some action. The citizens of the North West have been repeatedly been promised a rail link

and repeatedly let down by the same politicians that made the promises. I understand that there is a need to balance budgets and look out for the financial well being of the state, however there is also a need to provide the citizens of the state with a fundamental level of infrastructure that allows them to live productive and fulfilling lives.

All that we ask is that you fulfil your commitment already made to us and have a rail link (be it Metro or traditional heavy rail) operating between Epping and the Hills Centre by 2015 and Rouse Hill and the CBD by 2017.

I implore you – BUILD THE RAIL LINK TO THE NORTH WEST we needed it twenty years ago. The time for talk and inquiries has long past and it is now time for action.

Regards

Ben Kelly