

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE CBD AND SOUTH EAST
LIGHT RAIL PROJECT**

Name: Name suppressed

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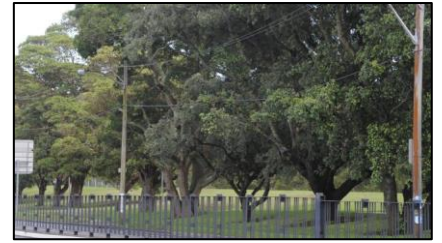
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MY SUBMISSION:

MY PERSONAL DETAILS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

Thank you for the opportunity to make a Submission to the Inquiry. My concerns include:

1. I read **the EIS** years ago, which led me to conclude that the project was not worth doing, for the simple reason that the estimated travel times into and out of the city were almost the same as existing ones. That alone should have rung alarm bells all round, so why the State government ignored the EIS is incomprehensible, considering the outrageous cost to the public purse of this project. The primary objective of any transport system is surely to be faster and more efficient than the one it is replacing?
2. **The impact on local businesses and communities** during the construction phase over the last 3 years has been excessive: There have been many bankruptcies as a result of loss of custom due to lack of parking and access. We now have many vacant shops as no-one is silly enough to take on a lease along Anzac Parade at this time, particularly if there is no planned Light Rail stop nearby. I predict that this will continue, and that Anzac Parade, once so pleasant and vibrant will become a sad and ugly replica of Parramatta Road – dirty, full of traffic fumes, uninviting, ugly and unloved, so much so that no one wants to go there. Is this what Light Rail is meant to deliver?
3. **The impact on Randwick City Council:** a great deal of parking space for business and the community has been taken away, and RCC has had to stump up \$68m to realign side street parking, and buy new land for building new car parks on to replace the car spaces that the Light Rail took. This is an unconscionable burden for the ratepayers of Randwick (of which I am one) as the Light Rail is going to be operated by a private company, not as a public service. The fact that there is not enough room along many sections of Anzac Parade in Kingsford and Kensington to hold both Light Rail lines, traffic and bus lanes was the original reason for the dismantling of the tram system in the 1960s. Since then, *Anzac Parade has not grown wider*. Doesn't this suggest that there is still not enough room? However, this is what has been foisted upon us at great expense to everyone.
4. **Bus journeys are very slow and uncomfortable:** The result of the construction zones has been the loss of all parking along Anzac Parade, so that the bus lanes have been squeezed into the former parking lane, next to the kerb. This lane has drainage pits about every 20m, set deep into the road surface. As the bus travels along this lane, not only do any pedestrians get covered in diesel fumes and the roaring noise of bus engines right next to the kerb, but the bus passenger has to endure a juddering teeth-shaking trip as the bus tyres crash into one drain after another. This is especially unpleasant if the bus is old with no shock absorbers. I realise that the Light Rail will be a much smoother ride, but the majority of people will have to stand, as it will be crowded from Day 1, and there are far fewer Light Rail stops than bus stops, so many will still be forced to ride on buses, as the nearest Light Rail stop will be too far to walk. Or they will be tempted to drive to the nearest Light Rail stop, and clog up residential streets with parked cars. This is not a good traffic or transport solution. This is not a good community solution.
5. **Loss of mature trees.** For me, this was one of the most harrowing aspects of what the Light Rail has meant: I stood on the corner of Darley Avenue and Alison Road for two whole days as trees were cut down one after another in an operation of military precision. It was a thoroughly shocking sight, I was powerless to stop it, I was angry and tearful, and I still feel traumatised. The sound of a chainsaw puts my teeth on edge nowadays, and brings it all back to mind. To add insult to injury, *it was totally unnecessary*. (See my next Point).
Here are some photos for you to see the beauty of the Alison Rd trees with bike path beneath (put in at Randwick ratepayers' expense a couple of years before) and the carnage of those two days and the result.



Above 3 images: the Alison Rd avenue of mature trees, with shady bike path beneath.

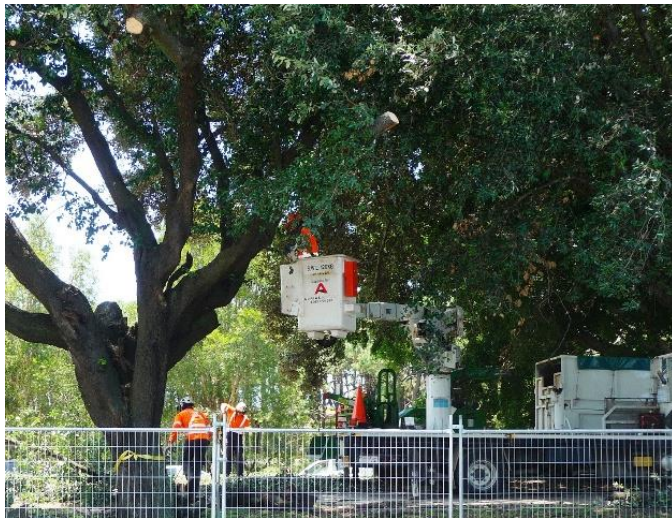


Above: view of the bike path from the corner of Darley & Alison Rds, Friday 8th Jan 2016; on the LHS are the branches of the magnificent Live Oak (a species from southern US).



Above: view of the bike path from the corner of Darley & Alison Rds, Monday 11th Jan 2016. As I was standing there taking this photo, a stream of people on bikes and on foot came from Centennial Park, turned this corner and did a double-take. They stopped in shock: On Friday when they had been here there was a shady bike track; on Monday there was nothing left.

Below: The military-style operation of cutting down more than 60 mature urban trees in 48 hours:





Above: the magnificent Live Oak on the corner of Darley & Alison Rds, in the process of being murdered.



6. **Corruption of due process:** The plan had been to route the Light Rail along Alison Road on the southern side, so that the Light Rail stop was at the Racecourse. Fair enough. Then, unbeknown to most of the community, a “last minute” switch was ordered by the Jockey Club or other powerful interests to switch the whole Light Rail route and station to the Northern side of Alison Road, where there was a strip of “vacant” public park along the edge of Centennial Park. This plan would mean that the Racecourse could keep their land free for coach and bus arrivals, AND have the Light Rail to bring punters to race days. This change of plan was exhibited for a mere two weeks shortly before Christmas 2014 (an old trick when controversial changes are made, so that the least amount of public are paying attention). I am one of the people who did not see this change of plan, and therefore could not “have my say”. In my opinion, such a huge change to the design of a project should have caused the total re-exhibition of the Project, for a period of not less than 2 months, rather than just a “Modification” exhibited for 2 weeks at a time when most people are busy doing other things. I feel that this was *deliberate deception* on the part of the government. 4500 submissions had been received for the original Light Rail plan, thus demonstrating considerable public interest. Only 118 submissions were received for Modification 1, most of which were against the changes. Did the government assume that this was a “sudden lack of interest”? Or was it a deliberate sneaky tactic to pass what they knew would be deeply unpopular, in order to pander to the wishes of the powerful Jockey Club, or whoever was behind the change? I suggest the Committee should probe into this question and obtain the answers, because there is something tantamount to corruption here, in my humble opinion. Moreover, the contracts were signed by the Premier with undue haste, as soon as the exhibition period was closed, at 4pm that afternoon. This means that no one in government had any time to read or consider all of the submissions as is the normal practice, and this in my opinion also constitutes another breach of the government’s own laws, guidelines or normal practices. I assert that as a consequence of the corruption of due process, not only did we lose a large chunk of public land to private interests from the edge of Centennial Park, we also lost a dearly loved avenue of mature shade trees. These things cannot be replaced overnight, if ever.
7. **Fig trees on Anzac Parade:** another totally unnecessary loss of at least 5 mature figs, merely to reroute Anzac Parade while the underground tunnel was constructed. This avenue was planted 150 years ago, and was consecrated as the Avenue of Remembrance in WWI to commemorate all the soldiers who marched along under the already-mature and large fig trees from Randwick barracks to the ships at Woolloomooloo. Most of those young men never came back, having perished at Gallipoli and in France. It was a terrible act of desecration to casually cut down even ONE of these trees to make way for a Light Rail that no one wants, but to cut down these trees merely for the purpose of the convenience of the construction company was mind-blowing. We will not forget.
8. **Developers rush in:** Notwithstanding the calculations that the Light Rail will be full to maximum capacity on Day 1 of operation, nevertheless, developers have lobbied or otherwise persuaded the State government to allow massive rezoning along the route of the Light Rail and changes of height restrictions, using the presence of Light Rail as an excuse for massive over-development. It is my opinion that if there is to be a greater population along Anzac Parade, it will need more than a Light Rail to shift the people to their destinations. Over-development such as that proposed for Kingsford and Kensington should ONLY be contemplated if there is an adequate heavy underground rail system *put in first*. The congestion this over-development is going to cause is dreadful to contemplate.

Conclusion:

The Light Rail has been a fiasco from initial concept to today, with no end in sight. We have lost peace, quiet, trees (along with oxygen, shade, habitat and food for birds and animals), parking space, aesthetic amenity, businesses, HUGE amounts of public money and many other things. We have gained nothing. The process has been very flawed, and possibly corrupt. I urge you to dig deep and question searchingly.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

Yours sincerely,