

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

Organisation: The Australian Economist's Advisory Group and Save the Parks
Campaign

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The Australian Economist's Advisory Group.

Kensington, 2033

22/6/18

*Rev Fred Nile MLC
Chairman,
City and South East Rail Inquiry,
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
Sydney, 2000*

Dear Chairman Nile,

City and South East Rail (CSELR)

1. The delays, costs and escalation of costs, and route of the light rail have called into question the logic of this NSW Infrastructure project.
2. Some of the questions raised in discussion with representatives of various community groups are listed below:
 - (i) Do buses cause congestion in the CBD rather than cars?
 - (ii) Are there means of diverting or stalling cars from entering the CBD such as CBD taxes (Cf London) etc?
 - (iii) Should the light rail go to Green Square instead of Randwick and Kensington?
 - (iv) Is the present route through Devonshire Street avoidable?
 - (v) Is the present route through Moore Park avoidable?
 - (vi) Should the George Street Light Rail end at Rawson Place?
 - (vii) Are there better ways of servicing the CBD?
 - (viii) Should the light rail go through the ATC Randwick land rather than the north side of Alison Road?
 - (ix) Is the CSELR still nor not properly costed?
 - (x) Why are parklands and streets being treated as free goods by the developer?
 - (xi) Was the temporary and permanent damage to parkland and street improvements and facilities properly costed?
 - (xii) What are the transport needs of the SCG, EQ and the Centennial Parklands, Prince of Wales Hospital, and UNSW?
 - (xiii) Have the losses of (a) businesses, (b) residents, (c) public transport users, (d) parks and (e) park users been costed into the BCR?
 - (xiv) Was the CP&MPT land that was leased to ATC south of Alison Road properly valued considering rezoning options before sale to the light rail operator?
 - (xv) Was the same land properly investigated for aboriginal artifacts?
 - (xvi) Why were trams and trolley buses taken off the roads in Sydney and what were seen to be the advantages?
 - (xvii) Are bus services more flexible and efficient than the current proposals in the CSELR?
 - (xviii) Does the CSELR transfer congestion and increase travel times for commuters and through traffic?
 - (xix) Does the CSELR involve increased transport costs and inconvenience for commuters?

- (xx) What is the capacity of the CSELR currently planned and in the future?
 - (xxi) What is involved in the event mode to deal with SCG/SFS patrons and UNSW students and staff?
 - (xxii) Are subways a better solution than bridges over Anzac Parade?
 - (xxiii) Could the light rail have been underground in Surry Hills, Moore Park East and South East?
3. A range of questions and comments have been made by myself and many others questioning the planning for this project. On some earlier comments on light rail see a few herewith (attached):
- (i) Letter to Premier Barry O'Farrell on 11/12/13 re defects in the EIS
 - (ii) Article by Walter Hook, Director of the Institute of Transportation and Development Policy, New York City, "Bus Rapid Transport, A Cost-Effective Mass Transit Technology" (2008)
 - (iii) Fact Sheet: The City South East Light Rail: A disaster in the Making (2014?)
 - (iv) SMH, "Call to halt 'white elephant' bridge across Anzac Parade" (22/5/2014)
 - (v) Daily Telegraph, "Fans will be funnelled to the footy via a new \$25m walkway over Anzac Parade" (26/2/14)
 - (vi) The Economist, "Streetcars and urban renewal: Rolling Blunder", (9/8/14)
 - (vii) Jacob Saulwick, "British heavyweights pull out of bid for Sydney city light-rail project", Sydney Morning Herald, 22/7/14
 - (viii) Letter to Premier Michael Baird, Urgent Request for reconsideration of Light Rail Extension, 8/5/14
 - (ix) Letter to Premier Michael Baird, Urgent need for a Town Planning Inquiry into CSELR etc, 2/6/14
4. See our letter to Jim Betts, CEO, Infrastructure NSW attached, re "Light Rail Criticism" drafted for the Save the Parks Campaign (10/6/18)
5. I hope that the above mentioned questions and comments are of interest and assistance to your inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Neil Runcie
Director

Save the Parks Campaign
Kensington, NSW, 2033

COPY

10/6/18

Jim Betts, Esq
CEO, Infrastructure NSW
SYDNEY
Dear Mr Betts,

Light Rail Criticisms

The City and South East Light Rail is not a “vanity toy”, as your predecessor Mr Paul Broad called it (*AFR 6/6/18*), but a “monumental disaster” for which politicians, senior public servants and contractors must take the blame. It is a “monument to incompetence” for the following reasons:

Firstly, it has done enormous damage, both during construction and permanently, to the Centennial Parklands, to the streetscape and to street capacity, to businesses and to residential amenity all along the route.

Secondly, the former CEO of Infrastructure NSW, Mr Broad, is right to point out the potential accidents to pedestrians and vehicles which were removed when trams were taken off Sydney streets.

Thirdly, the removal of trams helped to remove City and suburban congestion as well as safety and so to speed up traffic flows. The present arrangements reverse those gains and transfer congestion to other locations: Congestion in the CBD is caused mainly by cars with little attempt to address this problem (cf the London experience with City car taxes).

Fourthly, the City of Sydney, the SCG, the Centennial & Moore Park Trust, the ATC, and the University of NSW were certainly remiss in their initial advocacy of and or complicity with this particular light rail system in view of their vested interests overriding the obvious social, economic and one must stress environmental damage of the project.

Fifthly, the failure to conduct honest cost benefit analysis points to a serious weakness in economic advice in the NSW public service and to the need for an independent NSW Council of Economic Advisers (mainly leading academics) which could provide unbiased advice on proposals both to the government and the taxpaying public just as the Auditor General does retrospectively.

Sixthly, the NSW Opposition Leader, Luke Foley, is right to emphasise the opportunity cost of wasted taxpayer funds (eg with the stadia) and the hidden costs that extend to a wide range of social, economic and environmental consequences.

Seventhly, the users of the proposed transport system involving the light rail and redirected bus services will inevitably be paying a higher price in the long run in effective cost and convenience over the present highly efficient bus service to and from the South East. Mr Broad, along with other distinguished transport

investigators, is right to point out that Bus Services can deliver a more flexible and less costly service than the new heavy weight trams especially in the SE Peninsular. Note the earlier recognition of this potential with the Moore Park bus roadway.

Eighthly, the earlier removal of trams had many benefits. Think what Sydney gained with the world acclaimed Sydney Opera House that replaced the Bennelong tram sheds. Think of what Sydney loses in streetscape aesthetics, parkland aesthetics and the opportunities for more creative and economic uses of taxpayer funds and assets that have been misdirected by the pressure on government of misguided lobbyists. The visual cacophony of poles and wires should have been avoided especially in and adjoining our historic parklands and in settled historic suburbs.

Ninthly, the thrust of town planning investigations for the Sydney multicentre metropolis is that infrastructure should be directed to the Western Suburbs and to develop a transport system that supports this pattern of development across the Sydney Plain and corrects the present radial road and rail systems that focus on the City of Sydney CBD.

Tenthly, Sydneysiders like to think of Sydney as a global city. And thus its planners and politicians should not be making such globally infamous mistakes. "Copycat vanity", if that is what it is, fails to recognise the need for a Sydney solution that recognises our historic narrow streets, unique topography and historic need for rising living standards based on infrastructure that will add to productivity. The important failure to release important documents, to procrastinate, and to ignore informed criticism produces a lack of transparency and lack of trust in the NSW Government that has no place in our modern democracy.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Neil Runcie
Foundation President
Save the Parks Campaign

Dr Catherine Runcie
Foundation President
Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics