

**Submission
No 96**

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

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As a resident of Coogee, I have been impacted negatively by the CBD Light Rail project. I experience anxiety and grief as a result of the tree loss as well as loss of public parklands at Moore Park.

The CBD Light Rail process has been disappointing, misleading and frustrating. It has become clear that the NSW Government was going to push ahead regardless of expert advice or community concerns.

This was not a project residents asked for, as our bus service was gold class. Organisations representing corporate interests such as UNSW and SCG Trust lobbied for the project. These organisations are identified as “stakeholders”.

The CBD Light Rail has resulted in the loss of amenity, the loss of convenience, loss of ease of travel, loss of local businesses. The secrecy and lack of real community feedback and consultation has been devastating and disempowering. It is important to note my concerns are not about “change” as our area changes daily with development. This is about needless and widespread destruction.

The project was awarded on December 17th 2014 before detailed designs were completed and before the Department of Planning had reviewed and assessed Modification No 1 which included changing the carriage length to 67 metres, the change of route to north Alison Road which saw the removal of all the trees on Alison Road. The feedback time for public submissions was 14 days before Christmas when most people are busy with end of school, Christmas etc. This was not enough time to be informed. There are serious questions to be answered regarding the procurement of this project.

The Member for Coogee Hon. Bruce Notely-Smith said the following in November 2014 to NSW Parliament:

“Notes that this project will link Randwick and Kingsford to Central Station and Circular Quay using a dedicated corridor, separated from traffic, making it faster and more convenient for residents of Coogee to move around the electorate and to the city” (Parliament Papers south east light rail project 12 November 2014)

However, unlike the Inner West Light Rail the CBD Light Rail is not in a ‘dedicated’ corridor but road sharing for most of the route. 67 metre carriages will cross over 70 intersections. It does not have signal priority, journey times are Cabinet-in-Confidence and unlikely to be faster for residents of Coogee as we will need to take a bus to High Cross park and alight to then board the CBD Light Rail adding more time and inconvenience to a journey especially for the elderly.

This statement is not an accurate description of the CBD Light Rail. Nor did the Member for Coogee inform his constituents of the upcoming catastrophic tree loss.

As a State Significant project, the NSW Government was not required to provide detailed cost benefit business case. There is no cost benefit rationale underpinning this project. The economic assessment was never published.

Three criteria were used to justify the project. Based on the following information, unlikely any will be met:

Improved capacity- Unlikely to be realised based on the EMM Anzac Parade Corridor future Light Rail station and System Capacity analysis 20 January 2017

“It is a significant concern that the proposed Light Rail system capacity will actually be lower than the capacity of the existing peak hour bus services which are currently using Anzac Parade and Todman Avenue and the future corridor public transport system will effectively be operating at full capacity from the commencement of operations in 2019. This will require a significant number of existing peak hourly bus services (mainly the existing express bus service) to be retained if the system is to provide adequate public transport capacity for all the relevant areas of Randwick LGA in the future”

Faster journey times- These times are unavailable to the public as they are cabinet-in-confidence. The CBD Light Rail does not have signal priority.

Improved congestion- by removing 220 buses from CBD – these buses will be deployed elsewhere in the network thereby creating congestion somewhere else.

The term State of The Art light rail has been used to describe this project. I feel cheated by the NSW Government because its not Stae of the Art – its outdated, the poles and wires are an example of this.

Infrastructure NSW recommended against the CBD Light Rail. Just as the community warned about building a light rail in Sydney, so too did Infrastructure NSW “An Infrastructure NSW report- released in October 2012 by Mr Broad and then Chairman, former NSW premier Nick Greiner- alerted the Government to potential financial disruptions and lengthy delays” (ABC Fri 13 April 2018) Why were their concerns ignored?

The NRMA also voiced their concerns in their submission , the NRMA wrote “Through the removal of parking and restriction of east-west movement and right turns along the project corridor, NRMA believes the CSELR will adversely impact all motorists who live, work and visit the Randwick LGA’

“Since the Strategy does not identify these impacts, we expect there will be many people right across Sydney who will be unaware of the full extent of the TfNSW proposals to significantly reduce the numbers of traffic lanes, and increase the number of turn bans at intersections.”

The NRMA have been correct, the access for motorists has been severely impacted and has increase stress levels. What was once an easy to navigate area has become very difficult with narrow and slewing lanes. The difficulty will only increase when the CBD Light Rail is running as trains the length of jumbo jets will be sharing the roads.

Tree Loss

The Environment Impact Statement had scant reference to the historical significance of Anzac Parade as a living memorial. The consultants, including Elton Consultants who undertook this work did not properly inform of our most important living memorial, Anzac Parade. The public was also unaware that this avenue planting would be destroyed because State Significant over rides state heritage. The magnificent avenue planting along Anzac Parade consisted of Port Jackson figs that were dedicated to the sacrifice of World War 1 soldiers. (www.daughtersofanzac.org)

Experiencing this catastrophic tree loss has been traumatic. Like many others, I experience anxiety and grief when I pass the area.

The loss of many of Sydney’s most significant trees has diminished the feel and amenity of the area. The offset tree replacement is inadequate and does not properly account for or compensate the communities along the route as the tree canopy loss is greater than the offset replacement.

Aboriginal Artefacts

Passing the site of the Aboriginal artefacts at Randwick is also distressing. It is now the stabling yard, covered with cement ,poles and wires.

Centennial Ponds and Water Table

The ponds form part of the Botany wetlands and are vital to bird life both native and migratory. It is also home to the Centennial Park eel that migrates to New Guinea. When news of the 200 million dollar dam came out, I wrote to the government builder to express my concerns about the eel. The builder did not know anything about the eel. **I do not know if the eel has been impacted.**

The dam has affected the water flow of the ponds and there is now flooding on Alison Road in times of heavy rains, there is also increased flooding of Centennial Park.

At meetings with TfNSW we pointed out that the water table in Kensington was very high and the CBD Light Rail would impact the water table resulting in flooding. The community repeatedly asked for flood reports that were conducted in 2013 but they remain unseen.

Parklands

It has been devastating watching much loved green spaces and parks lost needlessly to cement and corporate interests. This includes **Centennial Park, Moore Park and High Cross Park.**

The east and southeast have Australia's most densely populated suburbs and very little green space. Our parklands are much needed for passive recreation and as escape from the city.

Despite telling the public that High Cross park was "saved", it turns out an electrical substation will be buried there resulting in the loss of trees. Another huge electrical substation has been located on the golf course side of Moore Park taking valuable land.

There are plans to turn Moore Park into a Sports and Entertainment Precinct. These plans are supported by the SCG Trust, the NSW Government, the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust as well as Carsingha, the leaseholders of the EQ (consisting of Mark Carnegie, Gerry Harvey, John Singleton)

The Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust appear to be failing their Charter to protect the Parklands. The Centennial and Moore park Trust Act 1983 states the Trust should:

. maintain and improve Trust lands

. to encourage the use and enjoyment of the trust lands by the Public by promoting and increasing recreational, historic ,scientific, educational, cultural and environmental value of those lands

. to maintain the right of the public to use those lands

. such other objects, consistent with functions of the trust I relation to the trust lands, as the trust considers appropriate

The Trust supporting the CBD Light Rail and its accompanying impacts has been troubling. More troubling, however, is the support for a Sports & Entertainment Precinct at Moore Park including building 2 car parks. Kim Ellis in giving evidence to the Stadium Strategy announced that the trust would be building two

carparks, one at the Gold Club and another at ES Marks Athletic facilities. **If the CBD Light Rail was described by Tony Ryan in Background Briefing “Bridge to No Where” ABC 2016 as the parking solution to the parklands, why does the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust now need to build two carparks?**

The financial compensation and sale of public lands for the CBD Light rail also needs to be investigated. This includes the land leased to the Randwick Racecourse and now the site of the stabling yards. As with so much of this project, the sale process of public lands does not appear to be transparent or in the interest of the public.

Consultation

The public was shut out of the decision making process very early on. Meetings were angry as the public demanded answers. Why was the CBD Light Rail being delivered when other options such as extending the eastern suburbs railway seemed to be a better choice? Why this route? It was obvious the businesses would be impacted by construction but also from changed traffic access.

No feedback was taken. From then it was information sessions where the public anger was broken up. Again, no feedback or concerns were taken on board. I was left feeling disempowered, angry and completely disillusioned by my government.

There are hundreds of newspaper articles documenting the process. This includes the many heartbreaking stories on the business owners who have been financially and emotionally ruined.

There were thousands of submissions to the EIS CBD Light Rail. Thousands of people attended meetings and public rallies. I can see the community has no energy left. The feeling is “why bother writing, it makes no difference”. This process has been devastating.

The community is broken.

Recommendations

All papers classified as Cabinet-in-Confidence including journey times should be released in full to the public.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) investigate whether appropriate anti-corruption safeguards are in place to protect the planning and delivery of the state’s infrastructure projects.

I hold concerns about the independence of private consulting firms commissioned to give the government advice. I question how the practice of declaring documentation and correspondence as Cabinet-in-Confidence can promote Parliament's or the Public's confidence in Government decisions.

A Royal Commission into the CBD Light Rail be called This would include the role of the SCG Trust and the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust and their role in the support of CBD Light Rail despite its obvious failings. This would include looking the financial compensation for public lands.

That the community is given the expected and documented number of offset trees asap and these should include Port Jackson figs.

Business owners impacted should be fairly and justly compensated.

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* Please find attached Keep Sydney Beautiful Submission Stadium Strategy Inquiry. I have enclosed this submission as the projects overlap. I was a co-author on that submission.