

**Submission
No 36**

INQUIRY INTO SYDENHAM-BANKSTOWN LINE CONVERSION

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UPPER HOUSE INQUIRY INTO SYDENHAM-BANKSTOWN LINE CONVERSION
PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE No 6-TRANSPORT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

I wish to contribute to this inquiry as a private citizen concerned with what I have read and researched. My overriding concern is why is an adequate heavy rail line being destroyed and replaced by a Metro system, with many comparative inadequacies and the rupturing of the direct route to the city and around City Circle of the T3 line? And why is the Government wasting an opportunity to extend Sydney's rail network rather than reinforce Sydney's inefficient "hub and spoke" network.

My comments under certain sections are as follows:

Terms of Reference:

(a) the adequacy of the business case and viability of Metro

No business case has been released to support the Metro (<https://au.news.yahoo.com/video>).

According to current NSW Government estimates, the total cost of the Metro line is up to \$12.5 billion, of which the Metro City and Metro South-West will take \$5.8 billion. The precise cost of converting Sydenham to Bankstown has not been revealed. Neither has a cost benefit analysis been released, as recommended by the Productivity Commission. It would be better to use this money increasing connectivity to suburbs without rail connections.

The governments of Hong Kong and Singapore have announced recently that they are replacing driverless metros with train drivers due to inefficiencies, the opposite of these plans. One of their trains in Hong Kong has derailed three carriages with eight injured (South China Morning Post 19/9/2019). This is a very serious situation for automated trains that have no driver or guard and confined egresses in tunnels.

The Metro train carriages will be fully imported from Korea and will only be able to operate on one line, 6% of the rail network. Presently the T3 rail line has compatibility with 95% of the Sydney trains.

The ripping up of the line will cause economic and social hardship never before seen in this area. It has ramifications for the rest of the city with the potential to cause serious financial damage to the economy.

The T3 line has one of the lowest rates of overcrowding of any Sydney line meaning there is no need for a rapid Metro operation. Official statistics from 2015 show that out of the 11 suburban lines, the T3 line only rates seventh for average load factors during the AM peak. The Illawarra, Northern, Inner West and Western lines have far worse overcrowding (Summary of Train Loads Sept 2015, Bureau of Transport Statistics).

Commuters along the T3 line will lose a direct city circle link to Museum, St James, Circular Quay, Wynyard and Town Hall for the first time in over 100 years and lose the ability to catch an express train to and from the city.

One of the arguments for single level Metro carriages is the fallacy that disembarkation is speeded up. This was found to be untrue according to ABC Fact Checker in 2012. Because most commuters will have to change between Metros and heavy gauge trains to complete their journeys, any supposed time saving will disappear.

Recently signalling was updated at Chatswood to take a Waratah train every three minutes. Why can't this happen on the T3 line?

Expecting commuters to walk 850 metres from Martin Place, up or down a hill, to reach Circular Quay is unviable, as are the expectations at other transfer points at Bankstown, Sydenham and Central.

University students and those visiting or working in the new Carriage Works area around Redfern Station will no longer have direct access to T3 trains. If they live west of Bankstown

station they will lose their direct access to the city having to change trains and systems twice in order to reach Redfern.

(b) the consideration of alternatives for improving capacity and reducing congestion
Howard Collins, Sydney Train's Chief Executive advised that 40% more passengers could be carried on the network with a digital upgrade of signalling costing \$3 billion (SMH 13/3/2019). In 2015, four rail experts, namely Ron Christie, Dick Day, Bob O'Loughlin and John Brew, warned the plans would result in the "degradation of the robustness and reliability of Sydney's existing heavy rail line" plus "replacing one rail system with another...is wasteful of limited resources. Prioritising of this line over other possible routes is highly questionable ". They warned that Metros are best suited to highly populated densely trafficked commuter areas over short journey times and not for long park and ride journeys. And also that "ultimately (it will) lead to the total network becoming gridlocked and unworkable" (SMH 19/12/2017). Dick Day, former head of planning and timetabling at Railcorp warned that "The Bankstown line metro conversion represents a poorly thought out initiative that will incur considerable expenditure and disruption yet is incapable of being used to its full potential to relieve congestion on the rest of the network" (SMH 22/1/2018).

A recent analysis by Matthew Hounsell [Senior Research Consultant, Institute for Sustainable Futures at UTS] found that this rail corridor is not operating at capacity and should not be a priority (The Conversation 13/3/2019).

John Brew, ex State Rail chief executive argues the "Metro millions should instead be spent upgrading the current system".

The Future Transport Strategy 2056 suggests an extension of the Metro from Sydenham to Malabar to the CBD. Morris Iemma said that the line from Sydenham was previously envisaged to travel from Sydenham to Matraville with a possible stop at the airport. This is a much better transport solution, linking suburbs not connected in a new transport corridor.

Sydney Rail Futures (2012) stated that the Canterbury-Bankstown, T3 line is not the main bottleneck in the system.

In 2013 when the direction of the T3 line around City Circle was reversed from Museum station first to Town Hall Station it added to congestion at Town Hall and Wynyard Stations.

A digital system upgrade, as has happened around Chatswood station, would increase service frequency.

(c) the factors taken into account when comparing the alternatives and the robustness of the evidence used in decision making

In 2012 Gladys Berejickian as Transport Minister stated that the North Shore Line and Western Line caused the greatest bottleneck and congestion on CBD stations but the bottleneck issue has been used as a reason for dismantling the Sydenham to Bankstown Line. The recent shutdown of the Chatswood Line so that signalling could be improved to run trains every 3 minutes on heavy rail should be instigated on the Sydenham to Bankstown Line. It would be a lot cheaper and retain the heavy rail line.

Melbourne has had private transport service for 15 years. Dr John Stone (University of Melbourne) stated "contracting out the delivery of Victorian public transport to the private sector has remained costly but has not led to an improvement in service quality.

(d) whether metro is a suitable means of transport over long distances,

According to the Sydney Morning Herald, 9/3/19, the use of the metro for long distances is not supported.

This proposed line starts and finishes at Bankstown. There is a proposed 400-800 metre walk at Bankstown to join the heavy rail line to and from Liverpool. This is daunting for those travelling to or from west of Bankstown.

In converting to a Metro system there will be no ability to continue the express trains that currently service commuters.

There is no guarantee that commuters travelling distances will have a seat as the metro train of eight carriages will have 378 seats compared with waratah trains that have 896 seats. Instead of 70% of passengers in peak hour and more at other times of the day, being able to sit, 70% will stand on the Metro, many for a long journey. Metro trains are designed for most passengers to stand. Commuters will not be able to read or relax during their Metro journeys as they have to hold on. Children and the physically disabled will find there are few adequate hold grips. With only 30% of commuters having seats, school children, the elderly and disabled will have great difficulty standing or securing seating.

Anyone wishing to travel to Erskineville, St Peters, Redfern or around the city Circle will have to change trains and systems, ensuring a long walk. A direct route to these stations will be replaced by at least two changes of trains/systems for those passengers from west of Bankstown. It is still not clear how commuters from Erskineville and St Peters will retain the promised number of trains that currently stop at these stations

(e) the consultation process undertaken with, and adequacy of information given to the community, experts and other stakeholders,

In the Minister for Transport 2012 report it stated that discussions had taken place with the community and businesses in relation to the options raised in the possible conversion of the line. There is no record of any consultation in 2012 or prior to that year.

Jodi McKay, previous Labor Transport spokesperson stated “We are talking about millions of dollars worth of projects and all we have is the release of glossy documents”.

(f) the impact on the environment and heritage conservation,

The revised plans propose up to 500 mature trees being removed along the line and at stations. Many of these are on Council owned land and not within the rail corridor. Department of Planning documents state that many of these trees will not be replaced.

There has been no full heritage appraisal of the corridor.

(j) the adequacy of temporary transport arrangements during the conversion process, including for people with disabilities

The temporary transport arrangements published in September this year and obtained through a GIPA application, are confusing. It appears that commuters from Campsie to Punchbowl will have to travel west to Lidcombe to catch a train to the city. The plan mentions 900 additional buses in peak hour on already crowded roads transporting commuters around the closed stations. This Temporary Transport Plan, to begin in December, has not been released to the public, despite being promised a year in advance. Twenty one million people use this line every year, most have no idea about suspension. How can you suspend this line with so many commuters using it and how will it be managed?

Noise and construction works during the conversion will disrupt and destroy businesses within 400 metres radius of the rail line. This will have a more disastrous impact than the difficulties encountered by the Light Rail Line. There are 13 stations involved, each with a strip shopping centre and parking around them. Parking will be restricted and the additional buses will clog up already congested roads. This disruption starts in December 2019 and is not due for completion till 2024. The government has proposed a small business package to compensate but has not as yet, less than three months out from the first closures, advised business owners about it.

A Transport for NSW Media Release (9th September, 2019) states that notification of the proposed temporary kerbside changes have today been sent out to the impacted residents, businesses and stakeholders”. This has not happened (21/9/19).

(k) the impact on the stations west of Bankstown, and Stations west of the Bankstown Line (Carramar, Villawood, Leightonfield, Chester Hill, Sefton, Berala, Birrong and Yagoona), will lose their direct city circle connection which has been in place for 100 years. They will have a 400m walk at Bankstown to access stations to the city and vice versa. This has been described by the former Administrator of Canterbury Bankstown Council in SMH as “impractical and unsafe”. This will be a huge difficulty for weary workers, the disabled, students and those with young children, particularly if they have had to stand on the Metro journey.

Nine stations will no longer have any direct train services to the City. This effects 19,000 commuters increasing their travel time. It breaks apart a cohesive rail network which has existed since the line was constructed

(l) any related matter.

The Temporary Transport Plan, to begin in December, has not been released, despite being promised a year in advance.

How is the government going to ensure the existing level of services from St Peters and Erskineville stations as promised? Presently between 7am-9am eleven T3 trains service stop at Erskineville and eight stop at St Peters.

The conversion of the Sydenham to Bankstown line is a deceitful attempt to build more high rise in two Council areas, Inner West and Canterbury Bankstown, that have already increased density to that desired by the Greater Sydney Commission. It is a trigger for overdevelopment of our area based on the Hong Kong model of towers around transport hubs. At present the Canterbury Bankstown LGA is the largest population in Sydney and is said to increase to be the second largest population by 2031(SMH 9/9/2019).

A total of 36,000 new dwellings are proposed along the corridor, with some streets of single storey dwellings replaced by towers of up to 25 storeys. There are no new plans for open space, hospitals or schools all of which are already inadequate for the present population.

It is perfectly feasible for the Metro line to stop north of Sydenham station and not impact on the Sydenham to Bankstown line. There have been suggestions for extending the line from Sydenham through the airport, down the Ramsgate Peninsula and over Taren Point Bridge into Cronulla OR from Sydenham via the airport to Matraville, Yarra Bay or Malabar OR through Hurstville to Miranda and possibly replacing the M6 proposed freeway through the National Park. All options need to be considered.

Our present Hub and Spoke rail network prevents Sydney from developing into a “30 minute City”. This city requires a network of Metros criss crossing the city between heavy rail, not replacing it.