

**Submission  
No 44**

## **INQUIRY INTO SYDENHAM-BANKSTOWN LINE CONVERSION**

**Name:** Mr Grant Mistler

**Date Received:** 1 October 2019

---

1 October 2019

Dear Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and Customer Service

**Re: Inquiry into the Sydenham-Bankstown Line Conversion**

I appreciate the time you are investing to consult in relation to the terms of reference of this review.

As a backgrounder, I am a long term local resident of this area, first as a renter and a postgraduate university student, and now as a property owner. Over the many years of living here around this train line, I have seen many changes of local councils, forced local council amalgamations, and dubious and visibly ugly new blocks of flats appearing on the horizon as local public transport options have been cut by the NSW State Government. This has invariably meant more cars on the road, and slower travel times compared to what I experienced as a child growing up in Sydney. I could say “you have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words”, but that would be a bit melodramatic perhaps.

There have been quite spectacular allegations of corruption around my local community and across wider Sydney in relation to property developments that are close to public transport networks. A few people connected to the former Canterbury City Council are currently before ICAC concerning properties in the Canterbury City Council local area,<sup>1</sup> The Hon. John Sidoti MP may have had some conflicts of interest surrounding his property dealings near Tallawong metro station,<sup>2</sup> and a few people from the former Auburn City Council may also have had colourful property development conflicts of interest. One solution against perceived conflicts of interest that may arise in connection to local and state government decisions and property development opportunities, is to deftly build in an independent external governance and anti-corruption oversight to actively minimise any perceived conflicts of interest from the start.

In terms of this Inquiry into the Sydenham-Bankstown Line Conversion, for me personally, I wish to see greater reference and greater emphasis placed on including the new Western Sydney Aerotropolis as part of a concerted link for any train system to improve capacity and to reduce congestion towards 2050. This is because communities west of Sydenham are desperate for easy access to employment, education, healthcare and entertainment opportunities. There is a concerted need for people around the Bankstown, Liverpool, Campbelltown and Parramatta hubs to be able to commute with less hindrance and with more speed towards each of those other areas, as those areas contain more and more world class employment, education, healthcare and entertainment offerings.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.icac.nsw.gov.au/investigations/current-investigations/2018/canterbury-city-council-operation-dasha](http://www.icac.nsw.gov.au/investigations/current-investigations/2018/canterbury-city-council-operation-dasha)

<sup>2</sup> [www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/sports-minister-john-sidoti-to-stand-aside-pending-icac-inquiry-20190917-p52s5u.html](http://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/sports-minister-john-sidoti-to-stand-aside-pending-icac-inquiry-20190917-p52s5u.html)

As the Aerotropolis was announced after the Sydenham-Bankstown Line Conversion was mooted, now is the time to reflect on this real Multifunction Polis and its immense positive benefits for Greater Sydney. It should be noted, that the planned Aerotropolis is almost equidistant from Campbelltown, Bankstown and Parramatta in terms of 'how the crow flies' – but in terms of traffic bottlenecks and traffic pinch points, that road network region is a living nightmare, with no foreseeable solution as the population continues to grow, and residents have little option but to drive, and to drive more and more.

Analysis of car ownership in 2011, shows 16% of households in Campbelltown City had access to three or more motor vehicles<sup>3</sup>, and 18% of households in Liverpool City had access to three or more motor vehicles<sup>4</sup>. In 2016, those figures grew to 18% and 22% respectively, which is a 12% increase for Campbelltown City and a 17% increase for Liverpool City. I have to repeat this statistic: more than one in five households across south western Sydney now have three or more cars – Ted Bullpitt from Kingswood Country would say “stone the flamin' crows”. The reason for this increase of households with three or more cars, is the lack of reliable and useful public transport networks across those areas, and the need to access employment, education, healthcare and entertainment within a reasonable and efficient manner. Ask those residents if they want more public transport options, and how that would improve their quality of life outcomes.

The NSW State Government is currently planning a new city for 1.3 million people around the Aerotropolis with no hospitals, and a disjointed public transport system. Therefore the corridor from Sydenham to Bankstown, and the major communities beyond Bankstown, need serious inclusion in a more streamlined public transport system, to link across already established train system arms, in a more efficient manner. That new airport should be included in any business case and viability study – and I believe that this should be an underground high-speed rail system. In today's Sydney Morning Herald, the City of Parramatta council reported that “a new wave of infrastructure and development is required to keep pace with the area's fast-growing population in the next 20 years”, and that they will deliver approximately 102,000 new homes by 2036.<sup>5</sup> Does that mean an extra 102,000 people or an extra 306,000 people for Parramatta?

I personally sat in on the Impact of the CBD and South East Light Rail Project inquiry that was overseen by the Legislative Council Public Accountability Committee on Monday 20 August 2018. The cost benefit analysis was heavily scrutinised, and the high amount of disruption, with the added ongoing time and cost blowouts for little public benefit was painfully evident. The evidence presented by independent experts across that entire inquiry showed drilling and installing a brand new underground rail system would have been far cheaper. They also showed how that would connect established jobs, hospitals, university and TAFE institutions, and sporting and recreation precincts across that heavily congested region of Sydney, away from already known road traffic bottlenecks and traffic pinch points. Can this Inquiry into the Sydenham-Bankstown Line Conversion learn from the mistakes that were uncovered by the Impact of the CBD and South East Light Rail Project inquiry please?

Thinking long term, back on 7 November 1946, The Sydney Morning Herald article “Relieving a Traffic Bottleneck” on page two reported on traffic snarls at Kings Cross, and the “delays caused by intolerable congestion during peak transport hours”. That was a Greater Sydney heading towards a population of 1.5 million people back then. One solution they identified then was “the construction of the eastern suburbs railway” line, which did occur, but only some 30 years later. Kings Cross station was built, and opened on 23 June 1979 – but, there is still intolerable congestion during peak transport hours today. Today presents a similar opportunity for this inquiry to deliver something

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://profile.id.com.au/campbelltown/car-ownership>

<sup>4</sup> <https://profile.id.com.au/liverpool/car-ownership>

<sup>5</sup> Sydney Morning Herald, 1 October 2019, p.32

outstanding for 2050, but with hopefully a much faster timeframe, that will ease already known road traffic bottlenecks and traffic pinch points.

The June 2018 Transport Affordability Index report by the Australian Automobile Association<sup>6</sup> reveals the average household in Sydney is paying around \$22,520 a year in car transport costs – that is an intolerable situation – that figure would be much higher for households across south western Sydney. It is further intolerable as Sydney traffic is slowing down according to year-on-year data<sup>7,8</sup> where, for example, to travel 7.44 km on Campbelltown Road inbound during peak hour in the morning took 10 minutes in October 2018, but now takes 12 minutes in June 2019. Average peak hour traffic speeds are woeful across Sydney,<sup>9</sup> and motorway road tolls continue to increase as wages remain stagnant. Across those nine months, the majority of those NSW State Government official figures are worse for average car commuting times around the Bankstown, Liverpool, Campbelltown and Parramatta hubs. This must be linked to the fact that in the past five years, the Greater Sydney population has increased by an average of 95,000 people per year, and closing the Sydenham-Bankstown Line will create further chaos as people change their habits, and drive more.

While the Board of the Reserve Bank of Australia today decided to cut the cash rate to 0.75%, which is a historic low, the NSW government's tenders website does not show any tenders underway for design or construction of future big transport projects.<sup>10</sup> Sydney has outgrown the ability to be so reliant on just a car-based transport system. If we are discussing a little Sydenham-Bankstown Line Conversion now, would it be possible to discuss how this will impact communities around the Bankstown, Liverpool, Campbelltown and Parramatta hubs, and how we can place greater emphasis on including connectivity with the Aerotropolis please? With today's lowest ever cash rate, and dire economic warnings to reboot our economy in a healthy manner, now is the time to 'think big' and connect Greater Sydney with a population forecasted to grow to more than 8 million people in 2050.

I understand the Aerotropolis will host a curfew-free, 24-hour airport, scheduled to open in 2026, and it should be noted that our current train system shuts down around 1am. This means our major rail network infrastructure does not operate for almost 25% of the day, and as the only international city in Australia, we should extend our rail network operating times to align with the Aerotropolis.

My proposal for this Inquiry into the Sydenham-Bankstown Line Conversion is to instead focus on building a faster underground rail system from scratch, to link those main Bankstown, Liverpool, Campbelltown and Parramatta hubs, with a concerted focus on connecting the Aerotropolis at a far better cost benefit analysis amortised over 30 years.

As a local resident, I welcome this review immensely, and I look forward to receiving the final report.

Yours faithfully

Grant Mistler

---

<sup>6</sup> [www.aaa.asn.au/2018/08/10/surging-transport-costs-are-squeezing-australian-households/](http://www.aaa.asn.au/2018/08/10/surging-transport-costs-are-squeezing-australian-households/)

<sup>7</sup> [www.rms.nsw.gov.au/documents/about/corporatepublications/key-roads-performance-report/key-roads-performance-report-2019-06.pdf](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/documents/about/corporatepublications/key-roads-performance-report/key-roads-performance-report-2019-06.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [www.rms.nsw.gov.au/documents/about/corporatepublications/key-roads-performance-report/key-roads-performance-report-201810.pdf](http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/documents/about/corporatepublications/key-roads-performance-report/key-roads-performance-report-201810.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/morning-peak-hour-traffic-worsens-in-sydney-20190627-p521zt.html](http://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/morning-peak-hour-traffic-worsens-in-sydney-20190627-p521zt.html)

<sup>10</sup> <https://tenders.nsw.gov.au/>