

**Submission
No 68**

INQUIRY INTO SYDENHAM-BANKSTOWN LINE CONVERSION

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Sydney-Bankstown Line Conversion

If the metro goes ahead, it will be a world first. I have travelled and worked in various cities in Europe and I have never heard of any city pulling out a heavy rail line and then running a metro on it and when completed, not removing one single car from the road and the line being run privately. Even London under a Conservative Government abandoned plans to privatize its metro and no other country in Europe has private rail or metro systems. I can only put this project down to incompetence, discredited ideology or corruption.

This Government has displayed incompetence on every other transport projects, such as the new Blue Mountains trains and the Sydney light rail and the airport link, which uses normal carriages without luggage compartments and is more expensive than taking a taxi when more than one passenger. Because of incompetence or underhandedness, it was sued by its own contractor. No doubt this trend will continue.

Every privatization in NSW has been to the detriment of the general public and any independent economist will state that it is a failed concept, as are joint/private public enterprises. This line is going to be operated by a private developer, in effect privatized.

I can only conclude that corruption is involved. I do not mean legal corruption, but our laws are so weak that political parties receiving donations do favours for their donors. Also Ministers who approve projects may be looking to their post political careers and lucrative board or consultancy posts as payoffs.

Metros all over the world have nodal points along their routes for passengers to change to heavy rail or bus stations or other metros. The Bankstown line proposal is a total perversion and misconception of what metros are about.

1(b) Road Congestion could be reduced significantly if the metro were built on areas of Sydney where there are no railway stations close by. This metro project may cause increased road traffic volume, not only in the construction phase but also long term because of the increased travel time and discomfort of metro transport. The current rail service should continue until Sydenham, saving millions or billions of dollars, given that there are problems with the City Circle.

(d) Metros are an inferior form of transport for long distances; they have less seating and that is why they usually are feeder lines with nodal points for commuters to use other forms of transport. Usually metro stations are 500 metres apart, not 5 kilometres. No parking is available near the stations now, so how can increase in commuter use be estimated?

(e) The only consultation I am aware of to have taken place for the community, was one presentation locally, where glossy brochures depicting the trains, surrounded by medium density or low density housing and green spaces and the propaganda saying a metro every 3 minutes. The reality is of high rise going up all along the line and the reduction of green space. I understand that the operator of the metro

is also a property developer, which seems a dubious arrangement. I am not aware of any other press releases or news about this development.

(h) and (i) Both the tender process and the contractual arrangements should be open for scrutiny by the general public since public money is being spent. The usual spruiking of Government about "commercial in confidence" does not wash because there will be just one operator finally. Any contract entered into by Government for major projects of a permanent nature should be open to scrutiny and the Government culture of secrecy altered (by Law, not voluntary codes of practice). That way the light rail court case disaster might have been avoided. Without open scrutiny, it stinks of shady deals and shonky arrangements similar to those associated with the buildings going up around the stations.

(j) During the construction phase, temporary transport is going to be a nightmare for thousands of residents. Canterbury road, the main road near the line, is already virtually a parking lot during peak hours with feeder roads onto it already experiencing queues and a high volume of increased traffic delays. I estimate that during peak hour, with 6 trains per hour, around two hundred buses for both directions will be required. There is no room on Canterbury Road for bus only lanes, so that presumably suburban streets will be used. Many commuters will use their cars to go to other train lines, such as the Inner West line or the East Hills line because to commute to the city by bus will result in much longer commuting times. This will create rat runs through residential areas with more danger for pedestrians and school crossings.

In conclusion, this project is totally ill conceived, whereby the wishes of the general public have been ignored and could only satisfy vested interests. Sydney is in desperate need of reduced road traffic, also for environmental reasons, and this project is a total dud in regard to that and will cause more pollution, not less through increased road traffic.