

**Submission
No 91**

INQUIRY INTO SYDENHAM-BANKSTOWN LINE CONVERSION

Organisation: EcoTransit Sydney

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Submission from EcoTransit Sydney to NSW Upper House Inquiry into Conversion of T3 Bankstown Line

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EcoTransit Sydney prepared this Submission in partnership with the **Sydenham Bankstown Alliance (SBA)**, which represents **8** organisations along the **T3 Bankstown Line** which is now part of the **Sydney Trains Network**.

EcoTransit Sydney and the **Sydenham Bankstown Alliance** argue that there are a lot of transport planning and engineering reasons for challenging the **NSW Government** for their determination to impose an inferior public transport solution on the residents and commuters along the **T3 Bankstown Line**.

These arguments can be summarised as follows

- **Sydney Metro** is a “metro” style service in name only. The characteristics of this service is quite radically different to acknowledged true “metro” services, like the famous **London Tube** and **Paris Metro** systems.
- **Sydney Metro** is a value capture play designed by the **NSW Government** to attract purchasers from the global investment community, to allow **NSW Government** to get out of running any public transport services in NSW as fast as they can.
- NSW governments formed by the LNP since 2011 have been totally incapable of negotiating acceptable outcomes with unions of staff running buses, trains, ferries and light rail services in NSW. Their solution is to build a totally separate rail system, using driverless trains and no on-board staff who could join the existing unions, like **NSW RTBU**.
- **Sydney Metro** has huge questions hanging over it about risk and passenger safety.
- Since 2011 **NSW Government** has deliberately avoided investing in upgrading the existing **Sydney Trains Network** with the latest digital signalling systems, elimination of track bottlenecks and most critically of all, essential maintenance on the power systems,
- **EcoTransit Sydney** and **SBA** believe that there is a much cheaper way of delivery a high quality, reliable and value for money rail transport system for greater Sydney, by retaining double deck trains of the **Sydney Trains Network**.

Our submission will set out the issues of inferior engineering and operations associated with **Sydney Metro** that mean it will be an inferior transport solution for the residents and commuters along the **T3 Bankstown Line**.



SYDNEY METRO - FACT AND FICTION

Fact - **Sydney Metro** (previously known as **NWRL**) was originally promised to be a full, heavy rail, double deck service connected to what is now called the **Sydney Trains Network**, by the incoming Barry O'Farrell led NSW Government.

Fact - All of the **Sydney Metro** lines announced by governments, both Labor and Liberal, have been headed by **Rodd Staples**.

Fact - **Rodd Staples** was put in charge of the **NWRL** in 2011 and set about changing it to a so-called "metro".

Fact - **Gladys Berejiklian**, NSW Transport Minister in 2011, had vehemently criticised the CBD metro, when still in Opposition.

Fiction - *"Only a metro can provide the capacity and service frequency that is required on the NWRL"*

Fact - The existing Sydney double deck trains can and do run at 2-3 minute intervals through the CBD, in peak hour. The **Paris RER** has progressively converted all of its lines to double deck trains, running at 2 minute intervals, to increase the capacity of the RER network.

Fiction - **MTR (Hong Kong)** won the operating rights for the **Metro Northwest** through an open and transparent tender process.

Fact - The tender process was set-up to ensure that the **MTR (Hong Kong)** would win the operating contract. The only other tenderer was Serco, who had no significant experience operating railways. Their presence of the tender list was as a "straw man", to add a veneer of governance and propriety to the tender process and disguise the fact that the **NSW Government** had already decided to award the operating contract to **MTR (Hong Kong)**.

Fiction - **MTR (Hong Kong)** is primarily a rail operator.

Fact - **MTR (Hong Kong)** is primarily a **property developer**. They have the development rights around every new station they build, a form of value capture to profit a private company.

Fiction - **Sydney Metro** is being built to provide improved public transport to existing suburbs.

Fact - **Sydney Metro** is being built to enable large tracts of Sydney's suburbs to be turned into mini Hong Kongs.

Fiction - It is necessary to compulsory purchase numerous CBD buildings to enable **Sydney Metro** to be built through the City.



Fact - The railways that run through the CBD by Bradfield were built without the need to compulsorily acquire the number of buildings that were bought for the **Sydney Metro**. Is **MTR (Hong Kong)** be handed the development rights to these building sites?

Fiction - **Sydney Metro** has to take over the Bankstown Line from Sydenham to get to Bankstown.

Fact - **Sydney Metro** could have taken a different route via RPA Hospital in Camperdown, Enmore, Arlington, Canterbury, Campsie and then run alongside of the Bankstown line to Bankstown (above ground) and then in tunnel to Liverpool via Condell Park.

Fact - The only reason to take over the **T3 Bankstown Line** is give the development rights at each station to **MTR (Hong Kong)** and to further fragment the existing **Sydney Trains Network**.

Fact - The distance between Epping Station and the new Cherrybrook Station is 6 kilometres with no way to evacuate trains in case of an emergency, other than detraining passengers via a ladder at the front and back of the train and walking them to the closest station.

Fact - The existing Epping to Chatswood line has a 800mm walkway throughout the length of each tunnel, which allows easy evacuation of a train in approximately 15 minutes, including people with mobility issues.

Fiction - The lack of a safety walkway for evacuation in the very long tunnels is not a safety concern, even though it could take up to **5 hours** to detrain 900 passengers.

Fact - True “metros” have very short distances between stations. The average distance between stations on the Paris Metro is **582 metres**.

Fiction - The “**Sydney Metro**” is a metro. The average distance between stations will be around **3.5 kilometres**, making it a suburban railway, with no way of increasing capacity with double deck trains, due to the restrictive tunnel diameter.

Our Question to be raised at the NSW Upper House Inquiry

Why has the NSW Government perpetuated the fiction that they are build a “metro” style rail system, when, in reality, it is more like the regional and suburban networks bringing passengers into London and Paris?



SYDNEY METRO WILL INCUR LONGER JOURNEY TIMES FROM BANKSTOWN TO SYDNEY CBD

The three timetables that EcoTransit had access to were introduced in 1987, 1992 and 2013 respectively.

It will be noted that the fastest train in 1987 was the **8.44am** from Bankstown, which took only **25 minutes** to Central. To achieve this time it skipped 7 stations and the slowest train took 32 minutes, which included a 1 minute scheduled stop at Sydenham. The fastest train today takes **31 minutes**, which skips 5 stops!

It is clear from these timetables that the services on the **T3 Bankstown Line** have been deliberately slowed down. The reason for this is probably due to the obsession with on-time running. It can easily be seen, by comparing the timetables, that the running times between stations has not changed significantly over the three timetables.

The question then has to be asked, why do the trains now take **6 minutes** longer than they did in 1987, when you take out the **1 minute** scheduled stop at Sydenham?

The answer is in the make up time that has been scheduled in, i.e.

1 minute between departing Dulwich Hill and departing Marrickville,

2 minutes between departing Marrickville, and

3 minutes between departing Redfern and arriving at Central.

This slowing of the timetable is evident to people who regularly catch the train when it sits at Sydenham, Redfern and Central because it is minutes ahead of the timetable!

It is not valid to compare the journey times in the current timetable with the projected times for the proposed "metro". If you contact the office of **Sydney Metro**, they will give you a projected journey time of **26 minutes** from Bankstown to Central. The projected time for **Sydney Metro** is based on **20 second dwell times** at each station, which is extremely optimistic at very busy stations.

Dwell times of this duration are already achieved with double deck trains at the less busy stations and average around **50 seconds** at the busy stations. If double deck trains were to be scheduled as frequently as the proposed **Sydney Metro**, the dwell times at the busy stations would be reduced considerably, by spreading the available passenger loading over more services.

Sydney Metro will have two less stops (St Peters and Erskineville) than the current route. To compare the times more accurately, you need to compare the **8.37 am** scheduled service from Bankstown in the 1987 timetable, which skipped both St Peters and Erskineville, but stopped at all other stations. This service took **29**



minutes and was probably operated by one of the old “**red rattlers**” with less power and not as technically advanced as modern, double deck trains. The **26 minutes** touted by **Sydney Metro**, with its modern driverless trains, does not compare well when compared with times achieved by the 80 year old “**red rattlers**”.

The following tables endeavour to give a better comparison between a double deck service and the proposed **Sydney Metro**;

* Assumes a 2 minute saving by reducing dwell times at busy stations.

Train Type	Bankstown to Central	Change Trains	Bankstown to Museum	Bankstown to St James	Bankstown to Circular Quay
Metro	26 mins	5 mins	34 mins	36 mins	39 mins
Double Deck at 1987 times	29 mins		32 mins	34 mins	37 mins
*Double Deck at 1987 times with higher frequency	27 mins		30 mins	32 mins	35 mins

Our Question to be raised at the NSW Upper House Inquiry

- Why do the trains on the **T3 Bankstown Line** now take **6 minutes** longer than they did in 1987, when you take out the **1 minute** scheduled stop at Sydenham?
- Were journey times on the **T3 Bankstown Line** to the Sydney CBD deliberately slowed down to make journey times on the proposed “metro” service look better?



SPIN AND DECEPTIONS BY NSW GOVT ON METRO OPERATIONS ON T3 BANKSTOWN LINE

Introduction

No sane state government would cannibalise two existing heavy rail lines with high quality double deck trains and convert them to a single deck metro with less than half the number of seats. This is however, what is happening in Sydney with the Epping - Chatswood Line and the **T3 Sydenham - Bankstown Line** being consumed into the **Sydney Metro**.

The **NSW Government** is not doing this to improve public transport and get commuters out of their cars and on to public transport. The **NSW Government** is doing this to provide developers the opportunity to over develop areas of Sydney, thereby destroying communities and destroying heritage.

The **NSW Government** doesn't want commuters to leave their cars in the garage and catch trains instead; this would destroy the business model of the private toll road operators, like **Transurban**, who donate significant sums of money to political parties.

The whole raison d'être for the **Sydney Metro** is

- to provide transport for families who will be crowded into high-rise developments along its route,
- to provide huge profits for property developers, and
- to cause the destruction of communities in suburbs such as Waterloo, Marrickville, Campsie, Belmore, Lakemba and Bankstown.

Prior to the 2019 NSW election the **NSW Government** was endeavouring to have contracts signed and **tunnel boring machines (TBM)** in the ground, for the second section of the **Sydney Metro** from Chatswood to Sydenham.

They were also be trying to have contacts let and work started on the third stage from Sydenham - Bankstown. If the second stage had been progressed to a point where it was not possible to vary the contracts, then it became inevitable, for largely political reasons, that **Sydney Metro** would be built at least as far as Sydenham.



Spin and deceptions

The NSW Government has promoted the **Sydney Metro** through a series of lies and misinformation.

1) The biggest of these these lies is that; “double deck trains can not be run as frequently as single deck metro trains.”

This is clearly false as double deck trains already run more frequently - every 3 minutes during peak periods - than the proposed 4 minute service on the **Sydney Metro**.

The proponents of the **Sydney Metro** will argue that the service can be increased to a train every 2 minutes, which would be a 50% increase over what is possible double deck trains.

This is **total misinformation** as it is possible to run double deck trains every 2 minutes, as is regularly done on the **Paris RER**. In fact, the **Paris RER** are planning to increase the number of services on some of their lines to a train every 90 seconds i.e. 40 trains per hour.

2) The next big lie is that “the Metro will increase capacity across the Network.”

The truth is that if the **Northwest Rail Line (NWRL)** and the Chatswood to Sydenham line had been built for double deck trains and integrated with the **Sydney Trains Network**, there would have been a general increase in capacity across the whole **Sydney Trains Network**. The only increase in capacity will be from Cudgegong Road to Bankstown. But if the service were to be operated by double deck trains, the capacity would be **22,500** passengers per hour, compared with only **15,000** passengers per hour with single deck metro trains. These figures are based on a train every **4 minutes** and at “crush” capacity.

The difference between double deck trains and single deck “metro” trains is more stark when seating capacity is compared. Double deck trains would have a seating capacity of **14,250** seats per hour whereas single deck metro trains will have only **5,940** seats per hour!

It is clear that had the **NWRL** and its approved and proposed extensions been built to accommodate double deck trains, the capacity of the line would have been far greater than that of the **Sydney Metro**.

3) The third biggest lie is that: “commuters will save up to 60 minutes per week on the Metro when travelling from Bankstown to the City.”



This claim can not be supported when comparing the current timetable with past timetables and with **26 minutes** that **Sydney Metro** claim for the travel time between Bankstown and Central. It is also untrue for people travelling from beyond Bankstown who will have to add a minimum of **5 minutes** to their journey, as they will be forced to change trains at Bankstown!

The following table shows comparative travel times between Bankstown, Central and City Circle Stations

* Assumes a 2 minute saving by reducing dwell times at busy stations.

The 1987 times were chosen for comparison as these times are more realistic than the current slow timetable.

It will be noted that the maximum time saving on the **Sydney Metro** will be **30 minutes** (based on a five day week in two directions) between Bankstown and Central. However, between Bankstown and City Circle Stations, the **Sydney Metro** will actually add **20 minutes** to a commuter's travel time when compared to the realistic times of the **1987** timetable!

4) The next biggest lie is that by taking **T3 Bankstown Line service out of the City Circle, it will free it up for additional services from the West.**

The **NSW Government** has committed to maintain the existing services from St Peters and Erskineville. To achieve this, there will have to be short services from **T4 Illawarra Line** or the **T8 Airport/South Line**, via St Peters and Erskineville, which will use the existing time slots that the **T3 Bankstown** services use.

There are already two spare time slots around the City Circle during peak periods. It is interesting to note that these two spare time slots will be taken up by additional **T3 Bankstown Line** services in the new timetable.



Destruction of communities

The **NSW Government** is using the **Sydney Metro** to justify the over development of the suburbs between Sydenham and Bankstown. There is some scope for increasing densities along the corridor. However, the plan to turn suburbs such as Belmore and Lakemba into mini Hong Kongs, with 25 storey buildings, will destroy existing communities and force many long term residents out of their homes and the suburbs that some have lived in for 60 plus years.

The **NSW Government** seems unconcerned with the feelings and rights of the current residents in the Sydenham - Bankstown corridor and only concerned with the profits of developers and the construction industry.

Destruction of heritage

The conversion of the **T3 Bankstown Line** to “metro” will necessitate the destruction of many valuable heritage buildings and platforms. These buildings and platforms are, in many cases, over 100 years old and are significant examples of irreplaceable railway architecture.

Many of the claimed “upgrades” to stations that the **NSW Government** spruiks are not necessarily part of a **Sydney Metro** conversion. Some of the stations have already undergone major upgrades with the addition of lifts and improved facilities. These same upgrades could be carried out at all of the existing stations without converting the line to **Sydney Metro**.

This is just another example of **NSW Government** spin meant to confuse people and gain support for what will be a downgrade to rail services on the **T3 Bankstown Line**.

Bankstown “all change please”

Commuters who currently catch **T3 Bankstown Line** serves from stations between Liverpool and Bankstown will be put at a significant disadvantage, having to change trains at Bankstown. This will add at least 5 minutes to their travel time, when they are forced to change trains.

The new timetable has been introduced in November will have 6 services per hour during the peak period from Liverpool to the City via Bankstown. There is no alternative route for these services as most of the spare capacity on the Western Line will be taken up by new services from Western Sydney, which rules out replacing the Bankstown Line services with services via Regents Park or via Granville.



The announcement “**Bankstown all change please**” will become a regular feature of the commute to the City from stations beyond Bankstown.

Saving the T3 Bankstown Line from destruction

To save the **T3 Bankstown Line** and the communities that stretch out along it, the **Sydney Metro** should be diverted from Sydenham on a route that currently does not have a rail service. This would actually expand Sydney’s rail network and not just replace one service with another inferior service.

EcoTransit has identified an alternative route that would not only provide a rail service to an area that currently has none but would also be an alternative to the **F6 Tollway** to the Sutherland Shire. The route would take the Metro south through Sans Souci, across the Georges River to a terminus at Miranda, where there would be an interchange with the Cronulla Line.

There would be significant commuter benefits provided by changing the route of the **Sydney Metro** from Sydenham to Bankstown to Sydenham to Miranda. The current T4 timetable has the fastest service from Miranda to Central taking 39 minutes and the slowest taking 54 minutes. On our suggested route for the diverted **Sydney Metro** EcoTransit estimate that all services (stopping at each station) would take **28 minutes** from Miranda to Central. This would give time savings between **11** and **26** minutes for commuters from Miranda.

The distance from Sydenham to Miranda is approximately 19 kilometres. Based on known costs of rail infrastructure in Sydney, EcoTransit estimates the cost of building the Metro from Sydenham to Miranda to be approximately **\$5.5 billion**.

Building the **Sydney Metro** along this route would be significantly cheaper than tunnelling for the **F6 Tollway** along the same route and would probably be a similar cost to the conversion of the Bankstown Line to metro!



CITY CIRCLE DECEPTION

One of the main justifications for converting the **T3 Bankstown Line** to a so-called “metro” is that by removing the services from this line, it will “**untangle the City Circle.**”

The result of this “untangling” is said, by the **NSW Government**, to be more trains running from the west to the CBD, by utilising the time slots currently used by **T3 Bankstown Line** trains.

The **NSW Government** also committed to maintaining the existing level of services from St Peters and Erskineville. To do this, additional trains will have to come from either the **T8 Campbelltown** or **T4 Illawarra** lines.

In the new timetable, there are 11 trains from the **T3 Bankstown Line** that stop at Erskineville between 7 and 9 am, on their way to the City Circle. Of these 11 trains, 5 also stop at St Peters. Of the other 9 trains that service St Peters, 3 are fast trains from T3 (which skip Erskineville) and 6 are fast trains from T8 (T8 through Sydenham is peak hour only).

To maintain the current level of service from both St Peters and Erskineville, if the Bankstown is converted to “metro”, time slots for 14 trains still need to be maintained around the City Circle for these services, i.e. $11 + 3 = 14$.

Where will these trains come from? The logical answer is increasing the number of all stops services from Revesby (T8), where there are turn back facilities and route them via Sydenham, St Peters and Erskineville. Some would skip St Peters (6) and some would skip Erskineville (3).

This would leave the same number of trains running via the City Circle as per the new timetable, leaving no additional time slots for trains from the West. Therefore, the only additional services that can be provided to the Sydney system, by converting the Bankstown Line to “metro”, are all stations services from Revesby to the City Circle.

The argument to convert the **T3 Bankstown Line**, to provide these extra services from Revesby, can be countered by analysing the new timetable in respect to the number of trains timetabled around the City Circle during the morning peak period.

The following table gives the number of trains timetabled around the City Circle between 7am and 9am.

The maximum number of trains per hour with the current signalling is 20. The above table clearly shows that there are 10 time slots around the Inner Circle 3 time slots around the Outer Circle between 7am and 9am.



These available time slots could be used for **T2** trains from Leppington, Parramatta and Homebush or additional **T3** services from Liverpool and Lidcombe via Bankstown.

If they were used for additional **T3** services, this would take the total number of service on the **T3 Bankstown Line** to 31 between 7am and 9am, or a train approximately every 4 minutes, the same frequency of service touted for the so-called “metro”!

Questions to be raised at the NSW Upper House Inquiry

1. Why is the **NSW Government** and **Transport for NSW** not exploring all options for maximising use of the City Circle?
2. Has the **NSW Government** and **Transport for NSW** explored the use of the latest digital signalling to increase the passenger throughput of the City Circle?



SYDNEY METRO HAS NEVER BEEN ABOUT PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- The **Sydney Metro** has never been about getting people out their cars and onto trains and light rail
- The **Sydney Metro** has never been about an alternative to tolled motorways
- The **Sydney Metro** has always been about the over development of areas of Sydney that the Government and their developer backers can profit from
- If the **Sydney Metro** were about public transport, it would not be routed to cannibalise two existing, well-patronised heavy rail lines
- If the **Sydney Metro** were about public transport the route would take it through areas of Sydney that currently do not have a rail service
- There has been a conspiracy behind the scenes to open up areas of Sydney for **Hong Kong** and **Shanghai** style apartment developments
- This conspiracy has been going on behind the closed doors for many years. This conspiracy led to the decision to build the **NWRL** as a “metro” instead of a heavy rail line, integrated with the **Sydney Trains Network**.
- This was the “thin edge of the wedge” for the developers and the backers of the **Sydney Metro** has never been about public transport. Their sights were then set on development opportunities in the CBD, Waterloo and from Sydenham to Bankstown.
- The article in the Domain section of the SMH on 29-Jun-2017 is evidence of the **NSW Government** and their developer backers. The headline read:

“Developer groups push for Australian cities to become more like Asia”

- To quote from the article by Nicole Frost:

When it comes city building, Sydney could learn a thing or two from Asia.

*At least that’s the conclusion that a panel of developers and industry figures came to at an event hosted by the **Urban Taskforce** in Sydney on Thursday.*

In particular the evolution of highly-affluent neighbourhoods in Singapore and Shanghai could serve as a road map for housing Sydney’s growing population, said Urban Taskforce chief executive Chris Johnson.

*The panel largely rejected the calls made by former NSW Planning Minister **Rob Stokes** for Sydney to follow Barcelona’s medium-density approach as opposed to*



the high-density “Shanghai route”.

- The **NSW Government** euphemistically describes the conversion of the **T3 Bankstown Line** as an “**upgrade**” and overdevelopment as “**urban renewal**”.
- EcoTransit views the conversion as a reduction in the quality of service and the over-development as destruction of community, destruction of heritage and destruction of public amenity.
- **MTR (Hong Kong)**, the appointed operator of **Sydney Metro**, built and runs the Hong Kong Metro. Their business plan is to build the **Sydney Metro**. It has never been about public transport but to fund it with building office and residential developments around the “metro” stations they will be managing.
- These developments are always high-rise, very dense in population and have faced a lot of criticism from urban planners. This now seems to be **MTR (Hong Kong)**’s and the **NSW Government**’s plans for Waterloo and along the **T3 Bankstown Line**.
- The crash worthiness of the **Sydney Metro** trains is lower than that of the double deck Waratah trains. Consequently from Sydenham to Campsie it will be necessary to either provide greater separation between the passenger and freight lines or build a crash barrier between the freight and “metro” tracks
- The conversion of **T3 Bankstown Line** to **Sydney Metro** will also require the straightening of all of the existing platforms,, as the platform doors cannot be adapted to curved platforms. Fitting expensive mechanical gap fillers is an alternative solution. But this is likely to increase the dwell time of “metro” trains at 12 of the 13 stations along this line.
- This will lead to the destruction of important rail heritage, some of which has only recently been restored and painted.
- The **NSW Government** has been unable to give EcoTransit a figure on the cost of the conversion. The cost could exceed **\$5 billion**, enough money to build 150 kms of new light rail lines!
- The service frequency offered by the **Sydney Metro** is **15 trains per hour** in the peak and **6 trains per hour** in the off-peak.



- Currently there are 7 trains per hour from Bankstown to the City during the peak and 4 trains per hour in the off-peak.
- Even with 8 more **Sydney Metro** trains in the peak, there will be 10% less seats!
- Without major re-signalling or other works, the number of trains per hour on the T3 Line in the peak could be increase to **9** and with re-signalling a further **4** trains could be added, bringing the total to **13**
- **13 double deck trains per hour** would have a seating capacity of **11,648 seats** compared to **15 Sydney Metro trains** with a seating capacity of **5,670 seats**
- With crush loading the 15 **Sydney Metro** trains in the peak can carry **18,000 per hour** where as **13 double deck trains** could carry **20,000 per hour**
- The cost of re-signalling would a fraction of the conversion of the **T3 Bankstown Line** to **Sydney Metro**.
- Quote from senior transport planner:

“The other fact not presented is that the current line is also capable of moving 50% more trains with no upgrade required, or 100% more trains with an upgrade to just the signalling. Furthermore, enhanced modern urban double deck rolling stock could increase capacity by an additional 30% on top of that, so the line could carry up to 25,000 passengers an hour in each direction with a train every 5 minutes, running faster than both the current services or the metro, for just the cost of new signals and new trains, or only a fraction of the cost of full metro conversion.

Yes that's right - better outcomes than metro but for only a fraction of the cost of what's proposed to be spent in metro conversion.

This is the crux of the matter, but these are facts that both MTR and Sydney Metro want to keep hidden for obvious reasons.”

- The proposed travel time for the **Sydney Metro** from Bankstown to Central is **26 minutes**. This is faster than the current fastest train, which covers the distance in **31 minutes**. However, when compared with the 1987 timetable, the **Sydney Metro** will be **1 minute slower** than the fastest train! Many of the trains in 1987 were the old “Red Rattlers!



Questions to be raised at the NSW Upper House Inquiry

1. Why is the **NSW Govt** and **Transport for NSW** deceiving residents and commuters along the **T3 Bankstown Line** about the lower cost of achieving a better train service using the existing trains and infrastructure compared with the high cost of converting the line to a “metro” service?



THE DEATH OF A NETWORK OR A BRAVE NEW “METRO” WORLD?

Introducing the pseudo “metro” rail system

N.B. This section of EcoTransit’s submission was originally written in 2016. But the points made are still relevant in October 2019.

With the cancellation of the Sydney **CBD Metro**, we all thought that the **City Rail Network** was safe and that the vital remaining corridors would be preserved for the expansion of City Rail service into the CBD. We were wrong. The **CBD Metro** helped to bring-down the former Labor Government when the LNP Opposition, led by **Barry O’Farrell**, opposed any proposal to build “metro” lines in Sydney. Now the same forces that were behind the **CBD Metro** have cornered the O’Farrell government and are leading them down the same dead-end track!

This decision by the **NSW Government** to build a “pseudo metro”, a line with a restricted loading gauge for single deck “metro style” trains, breaks a promise and commitment given by the then LNP Opposition, to build the **North West Metro Line (NWML)** to cater for double deck trains.

- Why have they now decided to bore the tunnels on the NWRL to 6.1m diameter, preventing any integration with the **City Rail Network**?
- Is it because the **NSW Government**, is driven by their ideology to remove guards and possibly drivers from the **NWRL** and from any future expansion of rail services and hence destroy the influence of the unions?
- Is it because they want their friends in business to make profits from the public purse by handing the operation of all future lines to them?
- There are many more questions that could be asked, but it is best left to the reader to decide on the appropriate questions and answers.

The **O’Farrell LNP Government** and the proponents of a “*metrofied*” **NWRL** have very deliberately avoided calling it a “**metro**”. They were very aware of the bad name given to “metro” by the previous Labor Government, with its original proposal to build a **North West Metro** and subsequently the **CBD Metro**. So the **O’Farrell LNP Government** and the “metro” proponents started to use terms such as “metro like trains” and “London style tube trains”; there was an avoidance of calling it a “metro”, as they knew it would make it harder to sell the concept to the public.



The decision by **O'Farrell LNP Government** to split up and privatise the **City Rail Network** was obviously taken many months ago, but was not announced to the public until very recently, with the hope of preventing anyone opposed to their plans from organising public protests. The announcement to build a “metro”, instead of a line capable of running double deck trains, was made at the last moment, the time at which tenders were being discussed, the point at which they had to disclose what their intent was.

What is a “metro” rail system?

In a recent talk to transport planners at UTS, **Dr Garry Glazebrook** drew two graphs on a white board to demonstrate the density of patterns of Paris and Sydney. The graph of Sydney showed a very slight, long incline from the fringes, rising sharply close to the CBD and then dropping sharply to a low, short decline towards the coast. The graph of Paris showed a steep incline from the fringes, then rising more gradually towards the CBD, with the pattern repeating itself on the other side; Paris being a fairly symmetrical city. He drew these graphs to demonstrate the differing transport requirements for each city.

Dr Glazebrook explained that the graph for **Sydney** indicated that

- the requirement of the rail network was to carry people over long distances,
- through low density suburbs,
- seating as many people as possible and deliver them to the CBD.

For **Paris**, on the other hand, he explained that graph indicated

- a much higher density overall,
- a density that requires trains with fewer seats,
- as the distances are shorter and the loading is much higher.

Dr Glazebrook went on to say that the **City Rail Network** performed its job very well, getting commuters to the CBD and that the **Paris Metro** did its job well, functioning as an underground light rail system.

Even though Paris is served by its extensive metro system, there is still a need for fast long distance commuter services. This job is performed by the **RER**; a network of lines with fast, double deck trains that deliver commuters to the centre of Paris. **Dr Glazebrook** was asked if the **City Rail Network** could be



compared with the **RER**. He agreed that it could be compared as both systems performed a similar task.

From **Dr Glazebrook's** talk, it is obvious to anyone with a modicum of intelligence, that the **NWRL** should be built as a full scale heavy rail line, serviced by double deck trains which would eventually run directly to the CBD, via a second harbour crossing.

Barry O'Farrell's legacy for Sydney's rail system

The **O'Farrell Government** is building in size constraints that will have a profound effect on the **City Rail Network** for many years to come. The creator of the network, **Dr Bradfield**, is revered and remembered as a visionary and we still benefit from his visionary thinking and forward planning. The **O'Farrell LNP Government**, on the other hand, will be remembered as the government who built discontinuities and obsolescence into the system. It prevents the **City Rail Network** from growing and providing the services that has done so well, ever since the days of Dr. Bradfield.

The only thing wrong with the **City Rail Network** is that there isn't enough of it! It is in fact a series of radial lines rather than a true network, which would make cross-country travel just as easy as getting to or from the CBD. Successive NSW governments have failed to expand the system sufficiently, to cater for the increasing demand and to reduce capacity constraints by building a second harbour crossing.

The **O'Farrell LNP Government** came to office promising to build the **NWRL** with a full heavy rail service and double deck trains. Now they have broken this promise and have chosen to build a **North West Metro Line** instead. This action is designed to deliberately sabotage the future viability of parts of the existing **City Rail Network** and will provide an inferior service for commuters in the North West of Sydney.

With small trains seating no more than around 400 people there will be standing room only after just 2 or 3 stations and trains will be running at 300% capacity, when full! As people attempt to alight or join at intermediate stations it will not be a comfortable journey over the long distances. Then on arrival at Chatswood chaos will ensue when people travelling to North Sydney or the CBD are forced to change onto already crowded, standing room only, trains to complete their journey.

Impact on the Epping - Parramatta Line



Building the **North West Metro Line**, instead of **NWRL**, will also prevent the completion of the Parramatta to Epping line being constructed to double deck standards thus preventing easy rail connection for people in Western Sydney to Macquarie University or employment opportunities at Macquarie Park Industrial area.

In fact, it is doubtful that provision will be made for the **Epping - Parramatta Line** at all; dashing the hopes of **Westroc** and other groups in Sydney's west, that the line will eventually be built.

People concerned by the **O'Farrell LNP Government's** decision need to make their voices heard, in opposition to the **North West Metro Line**.



NOTES ABOUT MTR (HONG KONG) IN SYDNEY

MTR (Hong Kong) has been playing a “long game” with the aim of implementing its Hong Kong business model in NSW. It had early success gaining a foothold in suburban rail operations in Victoria. But it needed to be very patient to find an opening in Sydney.

- o It started with two now prominent individuals in Sydney, who we refer to as Tim and Rodd.
- o A time line was put together by a colleague who was at the centre of transport planning inside the **NSW Government** leading up to the decision to build a “metro”. This timeline details the involvement of Rod, Tim and **MTR (Hong Kong)**.
- o In 2012 **NSW Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian** buckled to Cabinet pressure and the North West Rail Line (**NWRL**) was turned into a so-called “metro”.
- o Subsequently **MTR (Hong Kong)** were awarded the tender to operate the first section of the **Sydney Metro** - Cudgegong Road to Chatswood. The only other short listed tender was from **Serco**, but it looks like they were the “Claytons” tenderer, to make it appear like strict government tendering procedures had been adhered to!
- o **NSW Transport Minister Andrew Constance** has since extended the operating contract to give operating rights to **MTR (Hong Kong)** as far as Sydenham, without going to tender.
- o **MTR (Hong Kong)** are now nearing the end of their “long game”. The NSW Government got a bill through Parliament in 2018 to corporatise the **Sydney Metro**, without further delay whenever they chose to sell off all or part of the so-called “metro” service. This Bill gives the incorporated body unprecedented powers to buy and develop land and to build more “metro” lines, without further interference from NSW MPs.
- o EcoTransit believe that it is the intention of the Government to sell all or part of the **Sydney Metro Corp.** to **MTR (Hong Kong)**. EcoTransit believe that has been the plan since NSW Cabinet decided to build a “metro” instead of the **NWRL**.
- o EcoTransit has been predicting this outcome for many years.
- o EcoTransit have also predicted that **Rodd Staples** will become the CEO of the **Sydney Metro Corporation** when it is controlled or owned by **MTR (Hong Kong)**



- o The **NSW Government** has not budgeted enough money to complete the **Sydney Metro** from Chatswood to Bankstown. The published cost of this section is **\$12.5 billion**, of which only **\$7.5 billion** was allocated in 2016 budget.
- o Where will the other **\$5 billion** come from?
- o EcoTransit has always anticipated that the money to complete the project would come from developing land around the Stations.
- o Alternatively the **NSW Government** may be forced to sell even more assets, including Crown Land.
- o This has been obvious for some time with 19 high-rise CBD buildings being acquired to make way for **Sydney Metro** construction. The most publicised development on these sites, are the two towers that Macquarie Bank want to build in Martin Place, which will include them covering the cost of the Martin Place Metro Station.
- o Selling the corporatised **Sydney Metro** to **MTR (Hong Kong)** is planned to cover the **\$5 billion** short fall in funding by the over development at stations along the Sydenham - Bankstown corridor.

Questions to be raised at the NSW Upper House Inquiry

1. Where will the missing **\$5 billion** come from, in order to complete the **T3 Bankstown Line** conversion to “metro”?
2. Is the **NSW Government** planning to sell more asset to close the funding gap for the **T3 Bankstown Line** conversion to “metro”?



CORPORATISATION OF SYDNEY METRO

EcoTransit has taken a look at the “**Transport Administration Amendment (Sydney Metro) Bill 2018**” and have noted some very concerning aspects of it.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/bills/Pages/bill-details.aspx?pk=3500>

In EcoTransit’s opinion the Bill should be called the “**MTR Corporation Enabling Act**”, because the ultimate intention of the **NSW Government** is to privatise the **Sydney Metro** by selling it **MTR (Hong Kong)**. This is another step in the conspiracy to privatise public transport in Sydney and allow **MTR (Hong Kong)** to become in Sydney, what they are in Hong Kong - a development company that builds and operates metros.

The Overview of the Bill clearly states this: "facilitate the development, implementation and operation of a metro in Sydney by constituting **Sydney Metro** as a corporation and to provide generally for the corporation’s management and functions."

It further states:

"Proposed Division 2 of the Part sets out the objectives of **Sydney Metro**. The principal objectives of Sydney Metro are as follows:

(a) to deliver safe and reliable metro passenger services in an efficient, effective and financially responsible manner,

(b) to facilitate and carry out the orderly and efficient development of land in the locality of metro stations, depots and stabling yards, and proposed metro stations, depots and stabling yards.



Proposed Division 3 of the Part sets out the functions of Sydney Metro

Sydney Metro has functions relating to the construction, development and operation of the metro. It also may carry out, finance, manage or otherwise participate in development for residential, retail, commercial, industrial, mixed use, community, public open space or recreational purposes on land in the locality of a metro station, depot or stabling yard, or a proposed metro station, depot or stabling yard."

This bill, when passed gives **The Sydney Metro Corporation**, which will almost certainly be purchased by **MTR (Hong Kong)**, unprecedented powers to a private corporation to build and own railway lines. There have not been privately owned and built railway lines in NSW since the Silverton Tramway and the South Maitland Railway, which were built in 1886 and 1893 respectively.

Schedule 1 in the Bill

Schedule 1 [1] amends section 3 of the Principal Act to insert definitions of metro, metro assets, metro passenger service, **Sydney Metro** and **Sydney Metro Board**.

Schedule 1 [2] amends the definition of NSW rail network in section 3 of the Principal Act to make it clear that the NSW rail network access provisions of that Act do not apply in relation to **Sydney Metro**.

The corporatisation not only allows the **NSW Government** to sell **Sydney Metro** to **MTR (Hong Kong)**, it also prevents anyone from trying to GIPA documents, as all documents will become "commercial in confidence".

NSW Government may be in a hurry to sell **Sydney Metro** as they are currently **\$5 billion** short to complete the Chatswood to Bankstown section.

It has always been EcoTransit's opinion that **Sydney Metro** would be privatised and that **MTR (Hong Kong)** will use the development of CBD properties and the precincts around the "metro" stations to finance the completion of the **Sydney Metro** to Bankstown. **MTR (Hong Kong)** want to implement their successful Hong Kong style business plan in Sydney, regardless of what it will do to the fabric of our city!

The Bill was introduced for the second reading in early May 2018. The **NSW Government** was no doubt trying to get the Bill through the Parliament without any scrutiny. Sadly their tactic seems to have worked brilliantly!



Questions to be raised at the NSW Upper House Inquiry

1. Has the **NSW Government** taken any steps yet to offer all or part of **Sydney Metro Corporation** for sale yet?
2. Has the **NSW Government** had any negotiations already to sell all of part of **Sydney Metro Corporation** to **MTR (Hong Kong)**?



PLATFORM MODIFICATIONS

Two major problems need to be addressed, in relation to the existing platform structures, if they are to be adapted for use by **Sydney Metro** trains. These problems are the curvature of the existing platforms and their height in relation to the floor height of the “metro” carriages.

Existing platforms between Sydenham and Bankstown are not suitable for “metro” trains due to their curvature.

The curvature is a major obstacle in adapting the platforms for use by “metro” trains. The new stations on Metro Northwest are built with straight platforms, in order to minimize the gap between train door opening and the platform edge, and the space between the platform screens and the side of the trains.

Metro trains with platform barriers require straight platforms to operate safely.

The curvature of the existing platforms on the **T3 Bankstown Line** will result in very large gaps between the platform edge and the “metro” train doors, made much wider as the “metro” trains are narrower than the current double deck trains that service these stations.

The “metro” trains also have a set of doors in the middle of each carriage, which causes a greater gap than occurs at doors at the ends of the carriage.

Solution to the gap problem

The only way to bridge this gap is with mechanical platform gap fillers, placed where the platform doors are located. The gap fillers need to be activated before the platform barriers and the train doors are opened, to avoid the danger of passengers falling between the train and the platform.

Limitations of mechanical gap fillers

The operation of these gap fillers will delay the opening of the doors and add significantly to the dwell time of the train at each station. The extra dwell time will be the number of seconds required for the gap filler to cover the largest distance between platform edge and train, at each station.

EcoTransit estimates that the additional dwell time at each station would be on average, **20 seconds** at each station, covering the deployment of the gap fillers and their retraction before the train can begin to move.



Increased dwell times and journey times

There are nine stations between Sydenham and Bankstown. Consequently the additional running time required between the two stations would be a minimum of three minutes. The estimated time given by **Sydney Metro**, for a journey time between Bankstown and Central is **26 minutes**. This would increase to **29 minutes**, the additional time required for the use of mechanical platform gap fillers.

The use of gap fillers will increase travel times by at least **3 minutes**.

In the 1987 timetable, when many of the services on the **T3 Bankstown Line** were provided by single deck trains dating from the 1930s, the travel time between Bankstown and Central was **29 minutes!**

The proposed “metro” conversion will not provide faster travel times and in fact will be slower between Bankstown, and stations to the west of Bankstown, to destinations that commuters currently travel to.

Metro trains will be no faster than trains that served the Bankstown Line in 1987

Platform gap fillers only address the horizontal distance between the platform and the train. Where the vertical gap between the platform barriers and the metro train is more than 150mm, there is a danger that a passenger, especially a small child, could become wedged between the platform barrier and the train. At worst this could result in severe injury or death and at best, substantial delays journey until the passenger is freed from the situation.

There would be a need to provide vertical gap fillers where this situation could occur. This is currently not a problem with the double deck trains as platform barrier are not in place. The deployment of vertical gap fillers may also add to the dwell time of “metro” trains.

Vertical gaps between the platform barriers and the trains will just as dangerous as the platform gaps.

The other major problem with the existing platforms is their height in relation to the floor level of the “metro” trains. For successful operation of a “metro”, the platform heights need to be at the same level of the train floors, throughout the length of the line.

The Sydenham to Bankstown Line is over one hundred years old and all of the structures are either heritage listed or worthy of heritage listing. The platform heights vary, so the platform edges will require raising or lowering to the height of the “metro” train floors.



Impact on heritage buildings on platforms

Adjusting the height of platforms is a complex and expensive undertaking.

The temptation would be to raise or lower the finished surface level of an entire platform. But this could have unacceptable effects on the heritage buildings, because of problems caused by drainage of rain water, and sub-floor ventilation to any timber floors.

Steps would not be practical so ramps are one solution. But the gradient of the ramps may be excessive in some cases and therefore dangerous, especially in wet weather.

Adjusting the level of the track may be another solution, if raising the track level would solve the height problem. However, it is not normally possible to lower track level without completely lifting the track and the ballast. The substrate would need to be lowered before relaying and re-ballasting to prevent the track from sinking into the substrate and prevent “mud holes” from forming.

Sydney Metro needs to be instructed not to affect the heritage of the Sydenham to Bankstown Line, should they attempt to convert the line to “metro” operation.

Conclusions

EcoTransit strongly believe is not possible to close platform gaps or adjust platform heights in a manner that will not affect safety and heritage.



Questions to be raised at the NSW Upper House Inquiry

1. What design will **NSW Government** use to ensure the heritage of the buildings on the platforms between Sydenham and Bankstown?
2. What design will **NSW Government** use to safely close the gap caused by running narrower “metro” train sets on the converted line?
3. What design will **NSW Government** use to ensure that there is no risk of mechanical failure of gap fillers that could have a serious knock on effect and bring the whole **Metro Southwest** line to a standstill?
4. How will the **NSW Government** avoid longer journey times, compared with existing double deck trains, on “metro“ trains due to the longer dwell times at platforms cause by the use of mechanical gap fillers?



CONCLUSIONS

The conversion of the **T3 Bankstown Line** to “metro” operation will not achieve what the NSW Government claims that it will.

- The need for **platform gap fillers**, mechanical or otherwise, is a formidable negative for the plan to run so-called “metro” trains on the Sydenham - Bankstown line using the existing platforms;
 - it causes huge mechanical engineering complexity,
 - it generate a high risk of failure if just one gap filler at one door, of one train fails and then quickly shuts down the entire line in one direction.
- The huge cost of **platform gap fillers** cannot be justified compared to the functionality of the existing services provided by wider, double deck trains, with doors towards the end of the carriages and no central doors, as part of the existing **Sydney Trains Network**.
- EcoTransit have shown that the “metro” conversion will not improve travel times for the majority of commuters. It will in fact increase their travel time significantly, due to the longer dwell times needed for platform gap fillers to operate.
- It will not provide additional time slots on the City Circle for Western Line services.
- Metro trains will not add extra capacity across the network.
- The conversion of the **T3 Bankstown Line** will be a disaster for Sydney’s rail network and a disaster for the communities along its corridor.

Questions to be raised at the NSW Upper House Inquiry

1. Why is the **NSW Govt** and **Transport for NSW** deliberately deceiving commuters and local residents about expected travel times after the **T3 Bankstown Line** has been *metrofied*?

Colin Schroeder
Co-Convenor
EcoTransit Sydney

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