

Supplementary  
Submission  
No 81a

## INQUIRY INTO SYDENHAM-BANKSTOWN LINE CONVERSION

**Organisation:** KOAS (Keep Our Area Suburban)

**Date Received:** 6 November 2019

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## **Supplementary Submission**

This supplementary submission outline serious governance and probity issues, a lack of public accountability and a lack of sound empirical evidence and rationale in relation to the proposed conversion of the Sydney Trains Network's T3 Bankstown Line between Sydenham and Bankstown to Metro and the accompanying development.

In fact there are very serious concerns in relation to commuter safety and comfort, increased travel times for commuters and students alike and a loss of access to the City Circle from the conversion of Sydenham to Bankstown into Metro and lack of consultation with shopkeepers who will share the same fate as the light rail fiasco (regarding construction and noise disruption to businesses within a 200 to 300 metre radius of the proposed Metro)

These concerns center around the rail plus property model espoused by MTR Corporation which has been chosen to run the Sydney Metro Northwest effectively privatizing rail commuting in NSW for the first time , the role of Transport for NSW and effective privatization of Sydney Metro Corporation, the role of developer lobby groups and the role of the former disgraced corrupt Canterbury Council – including senior executive officers and elected councilors (and members of their families)

Of the most serious concern is the apparent land banking (and resultant land racketeering) of properties in the corridor which have seen property owners approached and some contracts entered into prior to the announcement on 14 October 2015 of the Sydenham to Bankstown Urban Renewal Strategy and the Sydenham to Bankstown Metro.

A live issue also continues to be the apparent stonewalling by NSW Transport to GIPA applications by various private citizens (including the writer) in order to obtain information which is of public interest in these matters.

The case has not been made out to convert the 122 year old Sydenham to Bankstown Sydney Trains Network line from double decker Waratah trains with drivers and conductors . In comparison, single deck, driverless conductorless Metro trains only have 30% of seats compared to double deck Waratah trains on the Sydney Trains Network.

Furthermore, the Committee should place very little weight on the evidence of the following groups such as Locals for Metro Southwest, Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue, together with the Canterbury Bankstown Chamber of Commerce.

These groups are heavily conflicted and noting that the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce has direct support from WestConnex and is not representative of the shopkeepers of Canterbury, Campsie, Belmore, Lakemba, Punchbowl, and has very little support from the Bankstown shopkeepers.

Locals for Metro Southwest is representative of property owners in the streets earmarked for high rise development in the suburbs of Belmore and Canterbury together with developers who have been actively land banking in the suburb of Canterbury.

The group was launched in June 2018 (organized by architects planners and property developers of who many do not reside in the suburbs in the corridor) at the Canterbury Bankstown Leagues Club whereby the Minister for Transport's personal video message was played to the attendees which included the writer.

No information has been provided as to how this video was obtained and no information appears on the Ministerial log of any meeting between the Minister and representatives of Locals for Metro Southwest

The following timeline (and attached documents) outlines these issues and concerns:

### **1. Busting the Bottleneck Myth**

**12 June 2012 Report - Sydney's Rail Future – Modernising Sydney's Trains** endorsed by the then Gladys Berejiklian MP Minister for Transport ( **refer to Annexure A**)

**This is a critical report in that page 9 under the heading Suburban Bottlenecks the following is stated:**

***The Western and North Shore Lines are the key bottlenecks of the network, as these lines have the highest level of interchange and station congestion in the CBD***

Of further significance is the announcement on page 18 that:

***"The Bankstown line will be converted for rapid transit trains, allowing the introduction of faster services with "turn up and go" convenience for commuters with services more than doubling after the connection to the new rapid transit system"***

**This is the first occasion that the conversion of the T3 Bankstown Line (from Sydenham to Lidcombe/Cabramatta) has been mentioned in any publicly available document.**

**It is to be noted that at that this time the T3 Bankstown Line did not have the patronage capacity for the Rapid Transit Trains (Metro)**

#### **1 b) Rail Advisory Committee**

**Attached and marked as Annexure B** is a copy of documents obtained under a GIPA which outline that only one meeting was held for the Rail Advisory Committee being on 24 May 2012 despite the fact that Rail Advisory Committee was scheduled to meet on at least 3 occasions prior to the Master Plan Rail Strategy.

Of further significance is the fact that the former head of operations for MTR was a member of the committee.

## **2. Former Canterbury Council Role in the Highly Flawed and Controversial Canterbury Local Environmental Plan Gazetted on 1 January 2013.**

The Former Canterbury Council advertised the Local Environmental Plan and proceeded to refer it public exhibition from March 2012 to April/May 2012.

The LEP 2012 was adopted by Council and referred to the NSW Department of Planning for gazettal on 1 January 2013.

The CLEP 2012 up zoned Canterbury Road and some residential areas for an increase in height and density to create up to **44,000 dwellings without notifying adjoining property owners and losing the advertisements and notification letters when requested in a formal GIPA in 2015.**

It is of concern that there appears to have been a coordinated effort to rezone the former Canterbury Local Government area for 44,000 units at the same time that the conversion of the Sydenham to Bankstown corridor was first touted – that is June 2012.

No paper trail exists as to why the Bankstown Line was chosen given that the Rail Futures document dated June 2012 does not state that the Bankstown causes any bottleneck for the City Circle.

## **3. NSW Department of Planning Correspondence 23 January 2015 Re - Control Project Group for SW Metro and Strategy**

**Attached and marked as Annexure C** is correspondence dated 23 January 2015 from the former Secretary of the NSW Department of Planning to the then General Manager of Canterbury Council outlining the following:

- a) Housing target of 664,000 new dwellings across Sydney by 2031
- b) Sydney Rapid Transport (metro) to run under Sydney Harbour through CBD and west to Bankstown
- c) Infrastructure catalyst (of Metro) for new housing
- d) Reference to HILL PDA market assessment for railway station precincts between Bankstown and Hurlstone Park including an appraisal of the property market and demand and feasibility analysis.

e) Establishment of a Project Control Group to direct the strategy

**To be noted that the HILL PDA report was not made available and we understand it was a draft as at August 2015.**

**Hill PDA was also used for the Sydenham to Bankstown Urban Renewal Strategy and was not released at the time the strategy was announced on 14 October 2015.**

**4. GIPA Documents Re Involvement of Former Disgraced Canterbury Council in Project Control Group**

**Attached and marked as Annexure D** is the GIPA response in relation to the involvement of the former Canterbury Council in relation to the Project Control Group and the implementation of the rezonings attached to the Metro conversion.

The significance of these documents highlights the fact that sensitive information re rezonings and the Metro were provided to the various senior Council Staff and Councillors – the very same persons who have been the subject of the Operation Dasha ICAC hearings in relation to serious maladministration and public office breaches.

The involvement of these persons has completely tainted the process for the strategy and undermined public confidence in the whole process.

**5. Urban Taskforce Submission to Transport for NSW in support of Southwest Metro.**

**Attached and marked as Annexure E** is Urban Taskforce submission to Transport for NSW dated July 2015 noting that :

*A "whole of government approach" is needed to maximise the potential of the Sydney Metro- CBD and Southwest in particular ongoing collaboration with the Department of Planning and the Environment".*

*It is to be noted that the Department of Planning & Environment is undertaking work on the Bankstown to Sydenham Priority Urban Renewal Corridor...*

**6. Committee for Sydney Submission Re Support of Southwest Metro**

**Attached and marked as Annexure F** is The Committee for Sydney submission on the Sydney Metro City and Southwest dated July 2015 noting on page 2 of the submission the following:

***“Projects like the Sydney Metro not only add capacity to the existing transport network and reduce travel times but crucially also provide opportunities for urban renewal”.***

To note that various members of the Committee for Sydney represented many of the consultants who were engaged to provide reports to the NSW Government for the Sydenham to Bankstown Urban Renewal Strategy which has been essential to provide the patronage for the Sydenham to Bankstown Metro.

#### **7. Gridlocked and Unworkable: Dire Warning for Sydney’s Trains from Former Top Executives – Re Southwest Metro and Conversion of T3 Line**

**Attached and marked as Annexure G** is a copy of a submission made by the former rail executives – John Brew, Ron Christie, Bob O’ Loughlin and Dick Day dated 3 July 2015.

This document was released via a GIPA and outlined in a SMH article dated 19 December 2017 (**Refer to Annexure G1**)

Of particular concern is that the submission outlines that the **“takeover”** of an existing rail line between Sydenham and Bankstown for the government’s single-deck metro train will remove **“the relief valve for the network”** and leave **“no escape route”**

They also make the telling comment that:

***Metro trains are best suited to highly populated densely trafficked commuter areas over short journeys and NOT long park and ride journeys.***

It is of major public concern that the submission appears to have been completely ignored at the time that the Government made the announcement on 14 October 2015 with much fanfare on the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald to build 35,000 units at the same to convert the Sydenham to Bankstown line from heavy rail to Metro.

8. **Order dated 10 December 2015 – Re Declaration of Sydney Metro City and Southwest Project as Critical State Significant Infrastructure.**

**Attached and marked as Annexure G2** is the material obtained under GIPA by the Canterbury Bankstown Council in January 2019.

It is to be noted that there are serious concerns in relation to the bona fides of this document noting that it took over 2 months for the material to be made available.

To allay community concerns it is highly recommended that the Committee seek to obtain the metadata in relation to the making of this document.

It is not clear what the social, economic and environmental benefits are of declaring the Southwest Metro as State Significant and Critical State Infrastructure.

Of further concern is that none of the local state MPs whose electorates of Canterbury, Lakemba and Bankstown ( which would be severely impacted) were not liaised with at all or even noted on front page of the documents as provided in Annexure G2

The Federal Members for Watson and Blaxland were also excluded from the list of MP's named.

Of concern is the assertion that community consultation occurred between 4 June and 17 July 2015 for the Southwest Metro.

We note a letter signed dated 21 July 2015 by the former General Manager of Canterbury Council – Mr Montague to Sydney Metro expressing support for the project (Refer to Annexure D in paragraph 4 above)

**Ministerial Comments re Metros**

**Attached and marked as Annexure G3** is SMH article dated 30 August 2016 where the Minister for Transport is quoted as saying the disruption to commuters and residents re conversion of Bankstown Line is a “necessary evil” and it was too early to say how many months it will be closed for construction.

On 26 October 2016 at a function for Committee for Economic Development of Australia - the Minister For Transport stated the following:

*"As a Liberal minister I'm not going to have to deal with the rail union any more because we're going to have driverless trains here" He told the Committee for Economic Development of Australia.*

*And guess what, that starts in 2019. And guess what, the unions and Labor party are opposed to metro because there are no more train drivers: no more union members"*

The above comments raise serious issues in relation as to the real reasons for *metrofying* the Sydney Train Network.

#### **9. Transport Administration Amendment (Sydney Metro) Bill 2018**

**Attached and marked as Annexure H** is extract of Hansard dated 2 May 2018 re the abovementioned.

#### **10. Sydney Metro Corporate Plan 2019/2020**

**Attached and Marked as Annexure I** is a copy of the Corporate Plan for Sydney Metro for 2019/2020.

The public were invited to comment on the draft Corporate plan in May 2019.

#### **11. GIPA's re Metro Southwest**

**Attached and Marked as Annexure J** is copy of various GIPA's made by the writer commencing in January 2019 in relation to various public interest matters pertaining to the Metro Southwest

It is to be noted that very little information was provided in relation to the above and the writer urges the Committee to see information to the schedules as sough in the revised GIPAs dated June July 2019.

#### **12. Wrong Corridor for Urban Renewal and High Density to Create the Patronage for the SW Metro.**