

CENTENNIAL PARK RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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All correspondence to:
21 Cook Rd Centennial Park NSW 2021

Response to the EIS CBD and South East Light Rail Project

The Centennial Park Residents Association (CPRA) is the umbrella organization of the street committees of the suburb of Centennial Park. Our charter is to protect and preserve the heritage and amenity of this historic garden suburb and its surrounding parklands for future generations.

The Light Rail project to the Eastern Suburbs is an opportunity to free up our congested roads by attracting commuters back to the public transport system. To be able to achieve this, the design of the proposed project needs to be able to deliver a service superior to that which exists with the present bus only system.

Obviously, a far superior system would be one built completely underground, where there would be no interaction with surface traffic. Such a system, as found in most progressive major cities in the world, can be constructed throughout Sydney comparatively cheaply as all tunneling is through sand and sandstone.

The CPRA fears the Light Rail system, as proposed, may not meet the needs of Sydney's commuters. It may be seen as a CBD transport system and then a specific destination service to the SCG/SFS, Royal Randwick Racecourse, Prince of Wales Hospital and UNSW. It certainly won't be seen as a preferred public transport system for most people along its route. This is because there are few stops where other commuters need to go. It appears the need for quick journey times are more important than attracting the travelling public.

The CPRA supports the need for the Light Rail through the CBD and onto the Eastern Suburbs. We are however concerned that the EIS has not adequately covered the critically important issues of heritage, parkland and tree preservation and aesthetic sensitivities and commuter convenience. The EIS is very light on detail and costs. Our Association believes that more research needs to be carried out before any final decision is taken. There is a chance that unless the Government's planning authorities prepare a comprehensive plan for the whole project we shall end up with an overly expensive inefficient light rail system that does not meet the needs of a growing city. Experience has shown that in projects like the Cross City Tunnel and the Eastern Distributor the 'developer/builder' dictated terms and conditions to the then RTA and this has led to some of the traffic chaos experienced today.

The CPRA's response is mainly aimed at the areas within the Moore Park and Centennial Park precincts plus where the Light Rail's close proximity affects some of the homes on Robertson Rd and Martin Rd.

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The EIS expresses few concerns about the loss of trees and of the loss of much needed parkland. It ignores the fact that the parklands are irreplaceable and therefore should be protected. There are engineering mechanisms available that can overcome many of the shortfalls evidenced in this document.

Concerns that need to be addressed

Overhead wires

All overhead wires are unattractive and interfere with the canopies of trees. Sketches provided in the EIS suggest that the overhead wires are anchored on either side of the street from existing buildings or from purpose built poles on either side of the street.

The Light Rail system, presently under construction on the Gold Coast in Queensland has a single post between the tracks with a T bar at the top from which the power line is suspended. It is neat and does not have unsightly wires across the street.

It is essential in our opinion that the use of overhead wires be avoided where they will interfere with important tree canopies on the parklands.

The trams.

Much research needs to be undertaken to select the most suitable tram design. Technology exists today where trams have inbuilt rechargeable batteries which allow them to travel some distance without overhead wires. This could remove some of the problems associated with intersections, tree canopies and aesthetic concerns. Sections of the track which come to mind are along the bus roadway parallel to Anzac Pde and across the intersections of Anzac Pde/ Lang Rd and Anzac Pde/Alison Rd.

Cut and cover for Moore Park West and portals.

We are strongly of the opinion that the tram route across Moore Park West (north of the High Schools) should be a cut and cover design with minimal parkland taken by the entry portal in Moore Park West and exit portal at Moore Park East.

Substation and charging infrastructure.

This infrastructure should be located underground and covered with grass.

Route running along Anzac Pde

The CPRA believes the Light Rail should be run on the current bus roadway with the buses returned to Anzac Pde. The bus roadway was laid on the old tram tracks that had been in place since the early 1900s. The major fig trees along Anzac Pde have thrived for over 100 years because

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their roots have found their way under the old tram lines. The current intention to route the Light Rail to the east of the bus roadway (ie on what is currently parkland) is strongly opposed.

There are major advantages in locating the Light Rail tracks on the old bus roadway.

- Minimum loss of much needed parkland
- No loss of the sporting fields used by hundreds of thousands of sporting people annually
- Preservation of the Swans training ground
- Better space to build proper Light Rail stops
- Minimal loss of trees
- Preservation of the heritage building on the corner of Lang Rd and Anzac Pde.
- Minimal damage to the existing fig tree root systems

All buses should be returned to Anzac Pde and Alison Rd. At present many buses travel on the three lanes each way on Anzac Pde. At each bus stop, when a bus stops to pick up or let down passengers the whole lane behind the bus is blocked and the three lanes become two. Would it not be wiser to place indents into the wide footpath on Anzac Pde to allow buses to leave the inside lane when stopping thus freeing up all three lanes for the traffic? Note too that there will be substantially less buses on the route when the light rail is operational.

Light Rail Stops

The CPRA wants the Light Rail to be a success. We are concerned that the proposed model will fail because the current proposal for a quick service to the interchange is more important than the convenience of the commuters.

The proposed model is flawed. Unless the Light Rail tram stops where people want it to stop it will not be used. It will not be a people mover. Increasing the distance between stops in theory may be fine but people do not live at the tram stop. After leaving their tram they may have to walk long distances to their homes. This may help them determine that the new transport system is not for them. Once lost to public transport it is very hard to get the commuter back. The system has to be a winner from day one.

Therefore to make Light Rail attractive one has to plan for better positioned tram stops. This will obviously increase the total trip time. The Minister will need to decide whether it is more important to have a short

travel time or a system that is embraced and used by commuters as the preferred form of transport. The Light Rail should encourage commuters who normally drive to return to public transport.

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One of the drivers for the Light Rail is the need to improve public transport to the major venues along the proposed routes – the SFS, SCG, EQ, Centennial Park, Moore Park sporting fields, Royal Randwick Racecourse, UNSW and the POW Hospital. But it is also important for the service to be an attractive alternative for the every day trips that do not visit these venues.

Specifically – there should be two stops in Moore Park. Firstly to service the SFS/SCG and secondly to service the the High Schools, EQ, RHI, the Hordern Pavilion, Centennial Park and the Moore Park sporting fields. The tram stop for the SFS/SCG does not in our opinion require a platform therefore allowing the stop to be as far north as is possible after the track surfaces beyond Anzac Pde. (even if the track is curved at this point). We oppose the construction of a two storey station as it is totally unsympathetic to the parklands. Such a structure would destroy the grand vista when one looks down Moore Park East from the north.

There should be a second stop just south of Lang Rd on Anzac Pde. This stop could utilize the Grand Drive entry affording a safe passage to the Centennial Park, EQ, RHI, the Hordern Pavilion and the Moore Park sporting fields. There is already a large bus stop at this point so it would not be difficult to turn it into a tram stop. The importance of this second stop cannot be over emphasized. It would service the very busy EQ, Centennial Park and the sporting fields. It would also allow the local residents access to the Light Rail. Most importantly however it would stop the SFS/SGC stop from being over-run by the commuters from all these local venues. Here we have seven major venues which attract vast numbers of visitors and yet the EIS suggests ONE stop for them all.

Moving the stop at Carlton St further south does not serve the ES Marks Field and may be better place further north.

In summary extra well positioned stops would encourage better patronage.

Moore Park and beyond

Once the track passes Robertson Rd both the Kingsford and Randwick line should leave the bus roadway and enter Anzac Pde near the traffic lights about 50 metres north of Alison Rd and progress south along Anzac Pde.

At Abbotford St the Randwick line should leave Anzac Pde and travel east towards the racecourse (this again was the route many years ago and the

reason for Abbotford St having a wide central grassed strip. The alignment of Abbotford St allows direct entry into the racecourse from where trams can run along the Alison Rd/racecourse boundary to Wansey Rd.

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The advent of the Light Rail through the CBD and onto the Eastern Suburbs has the potential to improve and enhance our great city. This opportunity should not be allowed to be lost.

**Peter Tzannes
Co Chair CPRA
16/12/2013.**