

Tracy Bellamy - Epping to Thornleigh 3rd track proposal SSI 5132 submission

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Subject: Epping to Thornleigh 3rd track proposal SSI 5132 submission
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from :

Malcolm Gray and Jean Tung

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Submission to the Epping to Thornleigh Third Track proposal SSI 5132

Construction phase

- Construction workers will be required by OH&S legislation to wear hearing protection on site as construction machinery will generate up to 122 dB noise levels (excavation machine with rock breaking ability, see EIS for details). However, residents adjacent to the construction works will be unprotected from this acoustic onslaught.
- Our house is only 30m away from the boundary of the railway line fence and vibration from heavy machinery during construction and increased frequency of freight trains during operation will cause considerable structural damage to our full brick house. We require an independent structural inspection of our house prior to construction commencement and to be duly compensated for damages incurred during construction.
- Noise mitigation should be undertaken before construction begins as construction machinery operation will generate noise levels up to 122db.
- A large section of the track would run through the Beecroft Cheltenham Heritage Conservation Area. Rare gang gang cockatoos and even an echina has been sighted opposite our house along the tall Sydney blue gum forest along the railway line fence. Severe construction noise and increased frequency of diesel engine noise would have a detrimental impact to the native wildlife.

Operational phase

- Based on the most recent (2011-2012) land valuation by the State Government Valuer General, our land has devalued by more than \$50,000 due to existing rail noise. This is typical of all the houses exposed to rail noise up and down Wongala Crescent. Our land value will drop even more with increased freight traffic due to the 3rd track.
- Hearing damage from Diesel freight trains for residents adjacent to the rail line will become an increasingly significant problem: the Beecroft to Pennant Hills section of track is one of the

steepest rail tracks in the state. It is also a tight bend. This combination produces deafeningly loud diesel engine roar (typically three locomotives per train) when going up hill and ear splitting wheel and brake screech when going down hill. The third track proposal will make this deafening level of industrial noise a routine, 24 hour a day feature of our suburb.

- The project must minimise this health destroying noise by both installing double glazing in houses adjacent to the tracks and building an acoustic wall to the west of the third track between Beecroft and Pennant Hills. Such walls are routinely used around all modern motorway, even though they typically have far lower peak noise levels compared to three diesel locomotive freight trains on full power. We note that such a wall was built to shield houses when the third track was built just south of Hornsby station.
- Noise remediation, as proposed above would be an insignificant additional cost to the complete project. For example, double glazing a typical house will cost approximately \$10,000 based on a recent quote we obtained for our house. There are less than 100 houses in urgent need of double glazing along the Beecroft to Pennant Hills rail corridor. Double glazing would therefore cost less than one million dollars. This represents less than 0.1% of the 1.1 billion dollar project cost. Such noise mitigation measures would bring both acceptance from local residents and, elevate the proposal to first world standards.
- Both our children have developed asthma since moving adjacent to the rail tracks at Pennant Hills. Any increase in diesel engine air pollution will increase the frequency and severity of their asthmatic attacks. As a matter of urgency, all diesel locomotives should have fine particle filters fitted before being permitted to operate in New South Wales. This would finally bring the state into line with first world standards.
- Diesel engine air pollution from freight trains is highly toxic and adds a significant pollution load to the Sydney basin. This pollution can readily be avoided by using electric freight trains. Such electric freight trains were routinely used across the Sydney electrified rail network more than three decades ago. The third track proposal should include upgrading the local substations so that the track can accommodate electric freight trains. In the long term, diesel freight trains should be disallowed within the electric network.

Conclusion

- The third track proposal as currently envisaged will severely damage the health of local residents, structurally damage their houses and destroy value in their house pricing. The Government should buy out local residents adjacent to the proposed third rail and protect more distant residents with both double glazing and the construction of an acoustic shielding wall. If nothing is done to minimise the impact of rail noise on local residents the project will become a festering source of resentment and hostility.