

CBD and South East Light Rail Project
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Derek Hodgkins
74/30 Nobbs Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010

12 December 2013

dezza@ozemail.com.au
0403 844 018

I am writing to you to give you my feedback regarding the CBD and South East Light Rail Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Overall I support the light rail, although am not convinced that the route via Devonshire Street is the best route given the impact on the environment and people's livelihoods.

All of the concerns I specifically wish to raise are regarding the effect upon the trees along the route in Surry Hills as I strongly agree with the EIS when it says that these trees provide a substantial contribution to the visual character and amenity of the locality¹.

Devonshire Street (near Northcott Estate)

I understand the need to remove the large trees outside Northcott Estate and also some in Ward Park. The EIS states that replacement trees will be planted in accordance with Transport for NSW 'Vegetation Offset Guide'². I assume that some replacement trees will be planted along the north side of Devonshire Street to replace those that have been lost along the south side.

I would like to point out that from Holt Street up to Riley St, the northern side of Devonshire street has overhead electrical cabling which crosses the road near Ward Park and continues down the south side of Devonshire Street to Bourke Street. This is not shown on the 'artists impression' pictures that have been distributed showing the area near the Shakespeare Hotel and Ward Park³.

As a consequence of the electricity companies regularly and severely pruning trees near overhead electrical cabling, all of the trees on the north side of Devonshire Street are weird shapes or have difficulty growing to a height much above 3 to 4 meters.

Replacing the mature large-canopy trees near Northcott Estate with trees on the northern side of Devonshire Street will therefore be ineffective in restoring the ambiance of Devonshire Street unless these cables are placed below ground.

The EIS talks about the 'undergrounding of electricity supply along Devonshire Street'⁴. I hope that this includes all the overhead cables in the street so that the replacement trees have the capability to mature unhindered.



Large-canopy tree on south side of Devonshire Street to be removed



Typical tree on north side of Devonshire street with stunted growth due to proximity of overhead wires and severe pruning by electrical companies

Bourke Street

I am concerned about the trees that may be lost in Bourke Street. Although it is not 100% clear from the EIS which trees they may be, I assume that the 3 trees on the eastern side of Bourke Street directly in front of the intersection with Devonshire Street (near Wimbo Park) are at risk. I have indicated these trees here:



These trees significantly enhance the ambiance of Bourke Street and any loss here would be severely detrimental to that area. I agree with the EIS in this respect⁵.

I can understand that perhaps one tree must be lost (probably the centre one) due to the route of the tram, but to lose 3 of these trees will be unacceptable. It is particularly not acceptable to lose any of these trees due to a temporary diversion of Bourke Street during construction⁶.



Mature tree at intersection of Devonshire Street and Bourke Street

Mature Trees near Olivia Gardens

Although I can see that the trees inside the boundary of Olivia Gardens are not of significant value, there are two trees just outside the boundary, on the northern side in Nobbs Lane, that are significantly better than the other trees in the area. I do not see that these have to be removed in order to remove Olivia Gardens, build the tram or turn the area into a park. I have indicated these trees here:



Mature trees in Nobbs Lane near Olivia Gardens

Fig Tree near Langton Centre

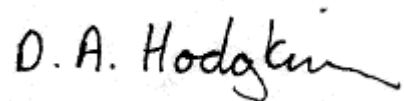
From the EIS I see that option 1b (the centre route) is the preferred option for the route through Olivia Gardens.

I wish to submit my strong support for option 1c (southern route) through Olivia Gardens because

- it will provide for a larger open park area than option 1b where anyone using the park (for example walking dogs, or playing games) would have to be constantly on the lookout for trams.
- the large Moreton Bay fig tree near the Langton Centre can be retained. This tree makes a substantial contribution to the visual amenity of the locality⁸ and the visual sensitivity of South Dowling Street is considered to be of regional level sensitivity⁹. Removal of this tree will also have a high adverse visual impact¹⁰.
- the acquisition and demolition of the former warehouse fronting South Dowling Street will be of benefit to the area it is an eyesore and provides no visual benefit to the area.

Please can you keep me up-to-date with information regarding the tram construction and operation in regards to the trees along this part of the route.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. A. Hodgkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Derek Hodgkins BSc Eng(Hon)

References

1 EIS Page 13-51

It is noted that a number of the planted trees within the Surry Hills Precinct are listed on City of Sydney's (2013) *Register of Significant Trees*, and/or contribute to the significance of listed heritage items (refer to section 13.8). A number of these trees also provide a substantial contribution to the visual character and amenity of the locality

2 EIS Page 13-54 section 13.6.3 "Mitigation Measures"

Where the loss of trees is unable to be mitigated through the above measures, Transport for NSW would replace trees removed as a result of the CSELR, in accordance with the Transport for NSW 'Vegetation Offset Guide' (2013d), which includes a principle of replacing 'the amenity/visual landscape value of vegetation removed' even if the vegetation may not have significant ecological value.

3 EIS Page 13-60

Figures 13.22 and 13.23

4 EIS Page 13-32

The removal of a number of street trees (refer to section 13.6) and undergrounding of electricity supply along Devonshire Street and at the intersection of Devonshire Street and Bourke Street (refer to section 13.7) would result in a change to the character of this precinct. Mitigation measures to reduce this impact are provided in section 13.7.4.

5 EIS Page 13-51

The area adjacent to the eastern side of the Devonshire Street/Bourke Street intersection contains large mature Plane Trees and Brush Boxes, which are typically considered to be in good condition, displaying healthy well-formed crowns. These trees make a substantial contribution to the visual amenity of the locality.

6 EIS Page 13-53

Trees within Wimbo Park would generally be impacted by the proposed CSELR tracks and associated infrastructure (e.g. overhead wiring), as well as a temporary diversion of Bourke Street, which would be required during intersection works at the Bourke Street/Devonshire Street.

7 EIS Page 4-17

As such, Option 1b was adopted as the preferred alignment and is described as part of the proposal in Chapter 5.

8 EIS Page 13-51

The Moreton Bay Fig makes a substantial contribution to the visual amenity of the locality.

9 EIS Page 13-55

The landscape and visual sensitivity of South Dowling Street is considered to be of regional level sensitivity as this is a major distributor road, channelling traffic from the south-eastern suburbs of Sydney.

10 EIS Page 13-62 Table 13.18

Potential Impact - High adverse visual impact