

Department of Planning and Infrastructure

Re: CSELR – response to Environmental Impact Statement

I wish to voice my ***opposition*** to the proposed design of the CBD and South East Light Rail project (CSELR) as described in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) dated November 2013.

While I support the CSELR, I do ***not*** support the Devonshire Street surface route and have concerns about the process of developing the EIS, which appears narrow and partial.

First of all, there has been **no genuine community consultation**. At her very first meeting with the local community in Surry Hills in March 2013 the Minister, Gladys Berejiklian, told us that the scheme was ‘non-negotiable’ and that the only input we would have would be the *colour* of the trams. If her intention was to show her contempt for the local community and the concept of community consultation, she certainly achieved her goal. We had been led to expect more from the O’Farrell Government in the lead-up to the last election so her statement followed by community noninvolvement and a resultingly flawed EIS has been very disappointing.

Now to the specific issues I have with the CSELR project as presented in the EIS:

My concerns relate to the Surry Hills to Moore Park West route via Devonshire Street because I live next to Devonshire Street and therefore have a local’s appreciation of this very pleasant village street and the businesses along it. I also have a very realistic view of its limitations.

- Devonshire is a very narrow street, a far from logical choice for a major traffic thoroughway – which Foveaux Street is already. It is a street which services the village of Strawberry Hill well in its present form and which will lose much of its amenity for Strawberry Hill residents if it is turned into a corridor for through traffic.
- So I challenge the implications of a statement in the EIS that Devonshire Street is the traditional and most direct route to Moore Park. This has been the case for ***pedestrians***, who leave Central Station at the Devonshire Street exit. However ***it does not follow that the most direct route for pedestrians is the best route for a light rail service***.
- It would seem obvious that pedestrians have little negative impact on the street they use and the area around it, while an above ground rail system could cause many problems, both during construction and operation.

It is an issue with the Surry Hills community that the EIS for the CSELR is totally focussed on Devonshire Street and does not properly examine the much better alternative routes – Foveaux and Devonshire sub-surface – and include an adequate cost benefit analysis of all three.

Such a cost benefit analysis would show what seems obvious to residents: that ***Devonshire Street is not capable of being ‘the spine of the South East Network’***, as the Minister for Transport expects because it will not be able to carry the increased levels of traffic that will need to use the light rail system into the future. By most estimates it will be operating at capacity within a very few years. It is also a highly pedestrianised street and the

LRVs will have to travel at slower speeds for safety reasons, further reducing carrying capacity.

Foveaux Street sub-surface is the only route with the capacity to support greatly increased traffic in future years because it is wide enough to support additional tracks and the LRVs will be able to travel at faster speeds with no risk to pedestrians.

There are also many present day concerns relating to the impacts of building a light rail service along this street:

Unacceptable noise levels. The narrowness of Devonshire Street means that noise is amplified along the built-up sections which comprise most of its length. This will exacerbate the unhealthy noise levels we can expect for people in homes and businesses along the route during the construction period. Once the line is in service, noise at excessive levels for a densely populated residential area will continue. For instance, the bells necessarily have a penetrating sound and residents will have to cope with them from early in the morning to late at night. The childcare centre opposite the stop will be particularly affected during nap time.

Business and economic impact. During the construction phase Devonshire Street will be a particularly unpleasant place to be because there will be a lot of noise, vibration, dust and disruption within what is a comparatively small space. There will be no escaping the negative impacts in Devonshire Street itself and so people will avoid it as much as possible.

The result will be great hardship for businesses along the street. When the service becomes operational those businesses which have managed to survive will be handicapped by the lack of parking along the street; parking being problem enough in the area even at present. – It is not a locality that can afford to lose *any* of the parking places it has now.

Businesses will also receive less passing trade, with potential customers being swept past them to the top of Strawberry Hill and the stop at Ward Park.

Foveaux being a much wider street, the construction area will be much more easily contained, reducing its impact. A sub-surface route along Foveaux Street will leave it very little altered after construction.

Traffic congestion. The intersections at Crown and Marlborough are likely to cause major congestion:

- The intersection at Marlborough Street is too close to the Crown Street intersection to also have lights. Interruption to the smooth flow of light rail and vehicular traffic in Devonshire Street west of Crown Street is almost assured. It will be exacerbated by the extreme (45m) length of the trams.
- The major traffic flow in the area is along Crown Street. With the frequency of trams going in both directions along Devonshire Street, either traffic flow along this main artery will be severely disrupted, or cars and trams will be banked up in Devonshire Street.

The only way to avoid this congestion would be to put the light rail service underground.

Demolition of 69 homes. This should have been a major negative for the Devonshire Street route; particularly considering that there would be no need for the destruction of housing via the Foveaux Street alternative.

Housing is in short supply in Surry Hills. The people who will lose their homes with the demolition of Olivia Gardens will be extremely unlikely to be able to purchase a

replacement apartment in the area. Many of them are long term local residents who lived in Surry Hills before making their homes in Olivia Gardens.

The human cost of people losing their homes should have precluded the choice of Devonshire Street when there is another option which avoids this.

Dislocation of Strawberry Hill. The fact that Devonshire is a small street in a densely settled inner city village means the negative impacts of construction work along it will be much greater than along its alternative, Foveaux Street.

Its transformation into a transport corridor for through traffic will bring no benefits to Strawberry Hill and have many negative effects for both residents and the small businesses along its length.

A sub-surface route along Foveaux Street would see it functioning basically as it is now.

Loss of Amenity. The whole nature of Devonshire Street will be transformed. Instead of a quiet, tree-lined, village street it will become a mere transit corridor with huge trams charging along it both ways every minute or so. The leafy canopy will be replaced by overhead cables and their supports, and the attraction of eating in the cafes and restaurants along its route severely impacted if not destroyed.

The illustration on page 13 of the November 2013 EIS Overview is completely misleading if only one in seven trees along the street will be replaced.

There will be another huge loss of amenity with a large section of Ward Park being used as a work-site during the five to six years of construction and a smaller area as a station precinct after that.

Destruction of many mature and well-developed trees. The loss of these trees will destroy habitat for the many species of bird life that inhabit the local area and it appears that only 14% of them will be replaced. The loss of these trees will make Devonshire Street both visually and environmentally arid.

Impact on parklands. Ward Park is well used by Surry Hills residents of all ages. They like to meet there, sitting on its shady benches or sprawling on its lawns, eating their lunches. It is an informal sporting ground and people walk their dogs there. It is a safe place for children to play and is used by the City of Sydney mobile play group Red Bus, and by after school care groups. The children's playgrounds there are also extremely well patronized. It is the site for fairs and concerts. In a built up area it provides a green open space for the residents of terrace houses and flats that is essential for their physical and mental wellbeing. They will lose this for an estimated six years if part of Ward Park is used as a work site during the construction of the CSELR.

Albert Park would be a much better option as a work site during construction. It is not used to anywhere near the same extent or in the same ways as Ward Park and is many times larger. Its use would not create havoc in the local community as taking over Ward Park will.

Loss of car parking. There is not enough parking in Surry Hills as it is. The Strawberry Hill area cannot afford to lose *any* spaces, let alone one hundred and thirty. Lack of parking will have a very negative impact on businesses and social life in the area.

In summary, I request that all possible Surry Hills routes be technically reviewed and supported with a cost benefit report (to be made public) demonstrating the preferred route and how it is suitable for the spine of the South East light rail network, enabling future expansion, and ensuring sustainability.

And I request genuine community consultation, which will help a better outcome for all in the short and long term, and ensure a more positive process for all stakeholders.

I am one of the thousands of people who have signed the PUSH Petition calling for an alternative Surry Hills route, and believe a sub-surface route (Foveaux or Devonshire) should be the default option.

Yours sincerely

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