

Due 18th July 2018, mail to:

Attn: Director, Infrastructure Projects
Major Projects Assessment
Dept Planning and Environment

GPO Box 39 SYDNEY, NSW 2001

**Personal submission to the Sydenham to Bankstown Submissions and Preferred
Infrastructure Report (Application No SSI 17_8256)**

July 2018

Thank-you for the opportunity to give feedback on the preferred project.

**I am opposed to the conversion of the Sydenham-Bankstown
heavy rail line to metro.**

I am pleased that the preferred project, as described so far, has addressed the widespread concerns about congestion and construction impacts, the planned destruction of railway heritage items and removal of vegetation. Unfortunately the response to submissions, and preferred project, falls short of community expectations. My submission follows:

The main concerns I have about the metro, the report on submissions and the preferred project are:

1. The response to concerns about the justifications for the project (Part B, Submissions Report p 14-15) does nothing to convince the community of its need, especially in the context of poor transparency regarding business cases, and political agendas relating to privatisation and property development.. The justifications have been contradicted by independent rail experts and Sydney's Rail Future 2012 (*"In the Sydney context an independent metro system would deliver few benefits in terms of service enhancement, capacity improvements or better operating efficiency on the existing rail network"*. P24, Sydney's Rail Future 2012).

Alternatives must be addressed to improve the heavy rail network's capacity (such as tunnelling options if the City Circle and Sydenham sites are problematic, and improvements in signalling and timetabling, now). Metro trains are designed for short distances with frequent stops; the capacity argument is based on most people standing.

2. The response has failed to acknowledge community concerns about the supposed benefits (Part B, Submissions Report p30-35):

-more **direct access will not occur** - the popular stops of St Peters, Erskineville, Redfern and City Circle will be lost. Commuters west of Bankstown will be worse off with many facing longer commuting times and less direct connections (Part B, Submissions Report p74 and 108). This is not an acceptable outcome and is contrary to one of the a major strategic

contexts - the “30 minute city” of the Greater Sydney Commission.

-opal ticketing is not a benefit - we already have it.

- the response to submissions fails to explain why a metro is needed for **accessibility upgrades** at stations (Part B, Submissions Report p29); many heavy rail stations have had such upgrades over time; there remains plenty of room for improvement for accessibility in the existing network, such as improved acoustics of announcements for the visually impaired. In addition, metro trains will have significantly reduced seating capacity, which is inappropriate for a 66km railway with an ageing population.

-the response addresses specific benefits for Hurlstone Park (Part B, Submissions Report p 36) The preservation of our railway heritage is welcome, but **the pressure for high-rise development** triggered by a metro would be unwelcome in this heritage -rich suburb. An increased number of services must be seen in the context **of this government incrementally reducing the number of services** to the suburb since 2013 and metro trains having significantly less seats. The claim of better connections to “key employment and service centres” is arguable, as current popular stops will be lost.

3. The response to concerns about development is dismissive (Part B, Submissions Report p36-39). The link to development has been made repeatedly, with the exhibited project acting as a “catalyst” for growth; the strategic context of the metro and its relationship to *Future Transport 2056* (which supports the concept of property value-capture), the *Greater Sydney Commission* (seeking to integrate land use and transport planning), and the *Sydenham-Bankstown Urban Renewal Strategy* (widely condemned by communities for its indiscriminate up-zoning plans; the invitations to Stakeholders such as the Australian Turf Club and the NSW property Council and the awarding of metro operations in northern Sydney to MTR Hong Kong with its “rail plus property” Business model. The project will promote growth in a climate of lack of community trust in the planning process and poor quality development without benefits such as affordability, green space and amenity.

4. The response to some of the negative consequence of the metro has been welcome:

-the decision to preserve, restore and re-use our **significant rail heritage** along the line is important. Part B, Submissions Report p48-49). The exhibited project demonstrated a reckless approach to heritage, and the use of heritage architects for the preferred project, should it proceed, is appropriate. At Hurlstone Park Station, the use of traditional hand rails for the stairs would be welcome. **Hurlstone Park Station was recommended for state heritage listing** in 2016. The community supports this and hopes that works for the metro would not impede such a listing. In the report’s Non-Aboriginal Heritage Assessment, Appendix F, it is admitted that some “items or fabric (are) proposed for removal andthe historic character of the line...would be altered by the contemporary metro”. (p93). This is of some concern and requires clarification.

-the decision to **abandon the inappropriate design plans for station precincts** is also welcome. It is disappointing that community input into station precinct and open space planning is given such a low priority, especially in the context of multiple submissions critical of the consultation process to date (Part B, Submissions Report p 51-53 and p 58-70). “Place-making” should begin with the people who live in and know in the places.

The Hurlstone Park Association should be one of the stakeholders consulted in the development of the “integrated urban and place making outcome” for Hurlstone Park Station.

5. Although construction impacts have been lessened, which is appropriate, the impacts will still be significant and temporary transport issues have not been detailed. The gas leak in the city on 7th July 2018 due to metro construction work is a concern; issues with cost blow-outs and legal proceedings for the light rail project do not instil public confidence. The predicted exceedences of operational noise criteria due to increase in train speeds are a significant concern. In Hurlstone Park, locals would welcome noise attenuation in the form of denser vegetation or other heritage sympathetic attenuation measures.

6. The franchising to a private operator is not supported. This has not been good for Melbourne or Newcastle, and we do not want it here. In particular, the Hong-Kong model of development, utilised by MTR Corporation, is totally inappropriate for many of the heritage-rich and garden suburbs in this corridor

7. The loss of the previously planned active green strip takes away one of the few benefits of the project.

8. The response to concerns about community consultation is inadequate and inappropriate. Justifying the many techniques used, and measuring success by the number of encounters, does not address the lack of engagement with, and failure to prioritise the input of, the communities along the line and beyond Bankstown, who are opposed to the project. In addition, the continued use of biased glossy brochures, which have replaced transparency and meaning, reveals little hope for meaningful consultation in the future.

9. I remain concerned about the loss of mature trees and tree canopy during construction, for example around Lakemba, Wiley Park and Punchbowl stations. There will be significant loss of vegetation from council-owned land along the corridor. (Appendix G 'landscape and visual' section).

10. The entire Sydenham to Bankstown urban renewal corridor has been an ill-conceived, rushed and entirely unplanned exercise in the destruction of the fabric and amenity of all the communities along the existing rail corridor at the behest of developers entirely in secret and without any initial community consultation.

11. Studies here and where implemented overseas have shown and proved that controlled development, continuous consultation provides the best outcomes for all communities.

12. What is required is not the destruction of our existing heavy rail line to the city, but an additional line to encompass the Metro.

13. Government is not listening to the residents as to where they travel to on the existing rail line. Changing lines where previously we did not get to the city is a travesty. Presenting us with “artists impressions” is such a nonsense as reality is so far removed from these pipe dreams.

14. The funds for the Metro should be diverted to the northern beaches where transport infrastructure is greatly lacking.

15. Planned under the Baird Government with Gladys Berejiklian as Treasurer and in

conjunction with many property developers through mostly Labor areas this “vision” had absolutely no consultation initially with the general public nor those living in the affected areas. Scoping studies commissioned were, and still are confidential and recently documents acquired by journalists show that lower cost alternatives were strictly forbidden to be acknowledged.

16. Creating certainty, amenity, organic growth, atmosphere is the most desirable for communities to grow and be profitable. Redeveloping great areas all at once and this monstrous idea of “value add” is an unconscionable idea to perpetrate on any town centre here or anywhere.

17. Growth in communities must be organic. Medium density low rise housing would be welcomed with the best planning. Councils **MUST** be allowed to guide the developments to be in keeping with the surrounds of the suburb.

18. Rampant building development as has happened in Canterbury and parts of Hurlstone Park **MUST NOT HAPPEN** elsewhere as they will become just like the housing commission slums we are removing here and have been removed from other countries as **THEY DO NOT WORK**.

19. **We MUST NOT become like Burwood or Strathfield.**

20. **The Metro funds MUST be directed to the Northern Beaches.**

21. **If the Metro is to go to Bankstown IT MUST be a separate line**

In summary, **this project should not be approved** because it lacks bipartisan and community support, and is the product of process that has lacked democracy and good governance.

The preferred project, to best benefit communities, and Sydney, should be :

- retaining the heavy rail, without a private operator

- investing now in time-tables and signalling, and connections for commuters beyond Bankstown

- upgrading all stations for accessibility, safety, landscaping and active transport connections

- retaining and restoring railway heritage to enable railway-related use including rest-rooms and toilets

- prioritising investment in new rail and rapid bus systems across Sydney instead of converting existing lines/ building more toll-ways