

16 July 2018

Personal Submission on the Sydenham to Bankstown Submissions and Preferred Infrastructure Report

Background

I live in Hurlstone Park, the smallest suburb in the Canterbury-Bankstown LGA. This heritage-rich suburb has a small shopping precinct with a village feel close to the railway station, which was recommended for state heritage listing in 2016. A council-commissioned heritage assessment in 2016 found that 60% of the dwellings in the suburb were of heritage merit and recommended several heritage conversation areas and listings, some in close proximity to the railway precinct.

More than a third of the 549 submissions to the Environmental Impact Statement for the Metro were from Hurlstone Park.

The community of Hurlstone Park has been vocal in their concerns about the *Sydenham-Bankstown Urban Renewal Strategy* which proposed highly inappropriate and indiscriminate re-zoning across many garden suburbs and heritage-rich areas. The closely- aligned Sydenham-Bankstown metro conversion has threatened similar changes, acting as a catalyst for growth, and having as its strategic context the alignment of land-use and transport policy of the *Greater Sydney Commission* and the value-capture and privatisation plans of the Government's *Future Transport Strategy 2056*. These concerns have coincided with contentious developments along the nearby congested Canterbury Rd, some of which are the subject of a current ICAC investigation, the first scalp claimed being a NSW Liberal MP.

The great unpopularity of NSW Planning policy along this corridor, along with a great lack of meaningful consultation and transparency has seen an unprecedented rise in community action groups and alliances, for example - the Hurlstone Park Association (formed in 2014 and of which I am a member), Sydenham-Bankstown Alliance, Save Dully Action Group, KAOS (Belmore), Marrickville Resident's Action Group, Save Marrickville South, Save Sydney Coalition, Save the T3 Bankstown Line, Ashbury Community Group, and the Canterbury Racecourse Action Group .

I remain opposed to the metro conversion of the Bankstown line for many reasons. While I am pleased that the government has responded to multiple concerns about heritage, station design and congestion issues, the preferred projects has, on balance, more negative than positive impacts for local communities and the whole transport network in Sydney.

Summary of concerns:

- The widespread use of private consultants in the assessments and reports of both the exhibited and preferred project, and in general, the sharply increased NSW government spending on consultancy firms while reducing the capacity of the public service.
- The privatisation of the service, beginning with the engagement of MTR Hong Kong to operate the Northwest Metro.
- The response to the submissions - which was repetitive in content and dismissive in tone, failed to address several widespread concerns, and was biased in its analysis and presentation.
- The justifications for the project, which remain unconvincing; and failure to consider more appropriate options and priorities.
- The negative impacts, which still outweigh supposed benefits.
- The mechanisms for heritage assessment and preservation, and station design, which are lacking in detail and commitment and do not prioritise community input.
- The high risk to local character and liveability because of development directly triggered by the metro.
- The ongoing denial of issues with community consultation.
- Poor governance, lack of transparency and conflicts of interest that have create a huge trust deficit between tNSW, the NSW government and communicates.

1. Concerns about the use of private consultants

I note the use of multiple private consultants in relation to the exhibited and preferred project - both for the overall reports and technical investigations and papers.

Like many NSW tax payers, and the Audit Office of NSW, I am alarmed at the government's outrageous increase in spending on consultants, while our public service is incrementally diminished. We are losing our corporate memory and skills, and paying more for this.

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/inner-west/nsw-premier-denies-involvement-in-westconnex-lease-deal-that-has-been-referred-to-the-icac/news-story/4fe7db56fa442cc1a005c5b7f2e7ebd5> (Daily Telegraph 11 Oct 2017, accessed 14 July 2018)

How outrageous that the auditor found outside consultants and or contracts were used on 82 per cent of major capital projects, and that the heavy reliance on outside consultants was particularly an issue in transport agencies "responsible for billion-dollar investment programs". Over-spending of \$250 million was related to this out-sourcing. The State Audit office commented:

"When project governance is lacking, there is a major risk of incurring additional unbudgeted costs."

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/government-spending-on-consultants-blows-out-by-250m-auditor-20171222-h09bso.html> (SMH - 26 Dec 2017 accessed 13 July 2018)

While communities have been pushing for green space, affordable housing and improved health and education funding, \$1.4billion has been spent on private consultants, and efficiency dividends are further tightened for the public service.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/nsw-government-spends-more-than-1-4b-on-consultants-since-2011-20180626-p4znre.html> (SMH 26 June 2018 accessed 13 July 2018)

The folly of this "small government" approach was illustrated in the West Connex-Dan Murphy's fiasco, with the public purse facing an extra \$50 million bill due to Rail Corp extending the private lease for 20 years without tender, and against internal probity advice. The plan, which has already cost us significantly due to private consultant involvement, was only abandoned after media reports.

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/inner-west/nsw-premier-denies-involvement-in-westconnex-lease-deal-that-has-been-referred-to-the-icac/news-story/4fe7db56fa442cc1a005c5b7f2e7ebd5> (Daily Telegraph 11 Oct 2017, accessed 14 July 2018)

2. Privatisation

A concern in many submissions was the privatisation of the railway's operation when converted to a metro. The recent franchising of the Inner West bus services was a source of public anger - the transport minister's response to community concerns was disdainful; indeed his motivation appeared to be to punish the public for complaining about services. It was obvious in submissions to the metro exhibited project that the general concern was about a private operator, but the response was patronising and dismissive:

"Sydney Metro infrastructure, including the stations, trains, tracks and wiring, would be owned by the NSW Government." "The train services would be run by a private operator, who would be required to comply with key performance indicators to ensure the network performs to a very high standard, including 98 per cent on time running and clean trains. " (Part B, response to Submissions, p78).

This response is inappropriate and privatisation is not in the public interest:

-the NSW Government boasts of its "asset-recycling" program, which is the political equivalent of using a hock shop to get you to the next pay day, lacks bipartisan and public support, and will leave this state asset and revenue poor.

-Minister Constance has been clear in his biased intent about privatising the line's operations:

"As a Liberal minister I'm not going to have to deal with the rail union any more because we're going to have driverless trains here," he told the Committee for Economic Development of Australia function.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/we-wont-need-train-and-bus-drivers-transport-ministers-prediction-20170816-gxxhsp.html> (SMH 16 Aug 2017, accessed 13 July 2018)

-the NSW government has "privatised" Newcastle, which is in a dire situation with its ports and mass transport services, now operated for profit, not service provision. Add to that the insult of slicing away the heavy rail line to the city, for the benefit of developers, and over-spending on a light rail link. Dr M Faruqi (The Greens) states that, in Newcastle,

"Since privatisation in July 2017, the percentage of buses that started their journey on time declined from 95 per cent to just 79 per cent, and barely half of the buses are on time in the middle of their journey".

<https://www.theherald.com.au/story/5162375/newcastle-has-become-the-victim-of-a-failed-privatisation-experiment> (The Herald 12 Jan 2018 Accessed 4 July 2018)

Franchising of Melbourne's train system has been a failure economically and in relation to service provision.

<https://www.themandarin.com.au/79973-franchising-privatising-public-transport-doesnt-live-hype/> (The Mandarin, 19 June 2017, accessed 4/7/18- a RIMIT academic review supports this view)

-privatisation plans are also implicit in strategic documents underpinning the metro such as the government's *Future Transport 2056*.

-the recent announcement to invest in signal upgrades by the Berejiklian Government (*More trains, More Services: Transforming Sydney's Railways*) must be met with scepticism. These upgrades have been prioritised to the T4 Illawarra and T8 Airport lines. In March this year the Sydney Morning Herald reported on the SmartRail program, the intent of which appears to be preparing the T4 (and Eastern Suburbs) line for privatisation. One could fairly surmise then that signal investments are aimed at private enterprise and not for public good.

"SmartRail will allow the independent operation of rail lines across the system, improving the capacity, frequency and reliability of the network" according to the strategy.

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/eastern-suburbs-and-illawarra-line-to-s-tand-alone-in-a-decade-report-20180327-p4z6j3.html> (SMH 28 March 2018, accessed 13 July 2018)

3. Response to submissions

The response to submissions was concerning in many ways, not least of all the dismissive and arrogant tone in which justifications and statements from the exhibit project were repeated throughout, as if the public simply did not understand.

The analysis and summary of submissions was biased:

-324 individuals submitted a form letter (the HPA one) so the issues raised were lumped together. 15 of these individuals, however, added extra comments, sentences or pages and these should have been classified as unique submissions, especially as many of the pro-metro submissions were only a couple of sentences.

-Only 17 out of 549, or around 3%, of submitters supported the project, yet supportive comments were given prominence, at the beginning of each section in the response section. In regards the project need, for example, it is stated (Part B, Submissions report p23) "A number of submissions expressed their support for the project, and/or Sydney Metro as a whole." (A truthful analysis would be "hardly any support was seen for the project"). The section lists about as many positive statements as negative statements which seems to infer a good level of support, which is clearly false. They repeat this technique throughout the response to submissions (see also p30 - benefits of the project).

It is really significant that the response was overwhelmingly negative; the two large councils (Inner West, and Canterbury Bankstown) expressed multiple concerns, and the project lacks bipartisan support.

The tone of submissions illustrated a great lack of confidence and trust in the government and transport and planning agencies.

The analysis was simplistic and quantitative - it makes no mention of the quality of submissions- opposing submitters were more likely to present lengthy and well-considered documents, while those in support largely submitted a few sentences, often parroting metro propaganda.

The submission process did not adequately screen for conflicts of interest. There appeared to be pro-metro submissions from families related to major developers, those hoping to sell to developers, and one from an ex-tNSW employee. For transparency, and to regain some public trust in projects, declarations of possible financial gain should have been mandatory for submitters.

There also appeared to be a political bias in the selection of stakeholders -I note that the NSW Property Council and the Australian Turf Club (as a major land owner) were invited, reflecting the Metro's role in development, as were the GSC and the Committee for Sydney (the first headed by Lucy Turnbull, the second previously so). The RTBU was not invited, yet arguably they have a major stake in the project. Again, the anti-union sentiments of the transport minister cannot be ignored.

4. Justifications, options and priorities

The response to submissions fails to address a major complaint - that by converting an existing rail line, rather than building a line to suburbs that don't currently have rail, the government is wasting the opportunity to extend Sydney's rail network. This argument is not a thought bubble.

Community members in the Sydenham-Bankstown corridor are well-educated and connected and are able to consider the voracity of opinions and advice they access or that is foisted upon them.

In relation to the justifications for the project, the public was advised it would relieve the bottleneck, and that by isolating the line, it would have entire network-wide benefits. According to the report:

"The project would address one of Sydney's biggest rail bottlenecks, delivering benefits across Sydney's rail network. The T3 Bankstown Line effectively slows down the Sydney Trains network because of the way it merges with other railway lines close to the city." (Executive Summary)

"The need for Sydney Metro was established by Sydney's Rail Future 2012a"(Part B, Submissions Report, p28) and

"While the project would result in benefits for wider Sydney, such as increasing rail capacity and access to a range of key destinations, there are also a number of benefits for local communities" (Part B, Submissions Report, p35).

According, however, to *Sydney's Rail Future* (Transport for NSW, 2012, p24):

"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. A dedicated metro-style system would not maximise the use of the existing rail assets. It would create a separate system that would divert funding away from service improvements on the existing rail network and only provide benefits to customers who use the new lines".

Additionally, past senior rail executives have contradicted the government's stance:

*"The state government's \$20 billion-plus metro train line under construction in Sydney "could have been built far cheaper with more sensible planning", four of NSW's top former rail executives have said in a highly critical assessment of the project. In an analysis released under freedom-of-information laws, the former rail heavyweights warn that the metro train plans will result in "degradation of the robustness and reliability" of Sydney's existing heavy rail network, and **"ultimately lead to the total network becoming gridlocked and unworkable"**.*

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/gridlocked-and-unworkable-dire-warning-for-sydneys-trains-from-former-top-execs-20171213-h03omz.html>
(SMH 19 Dec 2017, Accessed 2/7/2018)

Dick Day, retired urban planner and senior rail manager, has also been openly critical of this project, stating that

"a Parramatta metro line would do infinitely more to relieve Sydney's growing rail congestion than a conversion of the Bankstown line". (SMH 22 Jan 2018).

He also pointed out the added benefits of avoiding lengthy closures along the T3 line, and reinforcing Parramatta as another Sydney CBD.

When you consider the propaganda campaigns to promoted the metro, the ideological conflicts of interest of the transport minister (and the promotion of Rod Staples on the back of years of promoting the metro), and the not-so-hidden agendas of property development and privatisation, **the justifications provided in both the exhibited and preferred project are just not believable.**

Economic justifications are equally hard to believe. There have been significant costing errors and budget blow-outs in many major state projects (Newcastle Light rail link, WestConnex, the City Light Rail, and the projected costs of 2 new Parramatta schools, as just a few examples). The lack of public disclosure of business cases involving billions of dollars of public money does not instil confidence, especially when the State Government's lack of transparency and spending on consultants.

The project will also not support the emergence and productivity of a Global Economic Corridor as is claimed. People beyond Bankstown will have longer and more interrupted journeys, and the metro will deter work towards consolidation of “hub and spoke” rail network. A 30 minute city for many will be even further away.

5. **Negative impacts still outweigh positives.**

Construction and congestion impacts will still be significant; we already have a rail line, and a metro is not suitable for the length of the line and number of stops. I am concerned about rail line closures and the lack of a clear temporary transport strategy.

Rail line closures will still be significant. Analysis of the Preferred Infrastructure Project shows that total line closures have dropped from 71 weeks over the 5 year construction period to 53 weeks in the Preferred Infrastructure Project. However, a new category of Individual Station Closure has been added to the preferred project and all stations will now be individually closed for an extra 2 months each (at a minimum- light rail construction delays do not give instil confidence in these estimates). This re-categorisation makes it difficult to make a straight comparison between rail line closures in the exhibited and preferred project. With the Bankstown line experiencing aggregate closures of over one year out the proposed 5 year construction period, it is clear that disruption to the community will be significant.

In Appendix D it states that station construction periods will result in the closure of up to three stations concurrently for up to two months; this will be extremely disruptive for commuters and appears worse than in the exhibited project.

The report's traffic assessment is based on locations outside the project area (Wolli Creek, Clempton Park, Roselands, Lakemba, Narwee, Bankstown). It appears traffic assessment from Sydenham to Hurlstone Park has been ignored. It also appears that population growth and development has not been factored into the modelling. Traffic impacts are, therefore, unknown and are likely to be significant, especially during rail possession periods. Monitoring during closures is not reassuring; transport arrangements should be well thought-out before work begins. “Making it up as you go” has resulted in legal action relating to the light rail construction and the risk for this project also appears high.

Likewise, intersection traffic modelling is retrospective and based on 2016-17 data which fails to consider the increasing growth and development we are experiencing. Furthermore, the report suggests that level of service impacts (to level E and F in many instances, indicating the worst possible scenario) are acceptable during station closures; commuters would not agree, and neither would emergency workers trying to get through traffic.

The Sydenham-Bankstown line consists of 11 stations, and the government is spruiking the widespread benefits of its metro conversion, Unbelievably, this ignores the fact that almost as many stations will have worse service because of it. West of Bankstown the nine stations of Berala, Regents Park, Sefton, Chester Hill, Leightonfield, Villawood, Carramar, Birrong, Villawood and Yagoona will lose direct services to the city. In fact, some will have to double-back to Cabramatta. The conversion will significantly break apart a cohesive rail network for the first time since it was constructed; the number of interchanges and travel times from the nine stations west of Bankstown will increase. Approximately 19,000 commuters will be forced to change trains because of the conversion of the rail line which will add additional pressure on Lidcombe and Birrong stations, already under pressure due to the removal of the Liverpool via Regents Park train service in 2013.

Like the exhibited project, the preferred project will not stop at Redfern, the closest stop to Sydney University on the T3 line; it is therefore false that the Metro will deliver "better access to education, with fast, more frequent and direct connections" as stated in the executive summary. Further, students commuting from beyond Bankstown will need to change modes at Bankstown and then change again at Sydenham. The popular stops of St Peters, Erskineville, and City Circle will also be lost.

Seating impacts are significant and the the Preferred Infrastructure Project does nothing to address community concerns regarding the unassailable fact that seating on the Metro trains will be reduced. Currently each 8 carriage double-decker Waratah train has 896 seats. Each Metro will have 378 per eight carriage train. That is less than half the available seats. With an ageing population, this is not appropriate, especially given this is a line unsuitable for a metro given its relative length and paucity of stops.

While there is a proposed reduction in tree loss, about 500 mature trees will be removed along the line as well as at stations.. The proposed removal of mature trees will occur during the construction phase and many are on Council owned land, not within the rail corridor itself. The loss of tree canopy in an urban environment with global warming is not a good outcome.

Landscape scale biodiversity conservation is an approach that the GSC is actively supporting in Western Sydney with the Badgerys Creek Airport where Greening Australia's grassy ground-cover restoration work is written into the project as part of the environmental requirements. Greening Australia is successfully advocating for the novel application of complex ground-cover in areas such as road, rail, water and utilities corridors. This is happening in Western Sydney, so one has to wonder why the strategy has been ignored in the the Preferred Infrastructure Report.

Other benefits spruiked are not actually benefits. For example “opal ticketing” which we have already.

Accessibility upgrades are not dependant on a metro and noting in the preferred infratrucure report explains why this should be so.

In my opinion, the benefits for this project rest with a select few - developers, MTR Hong Kong, the transport minister and Rod Staples, who appears to have been promoted to transport secretary on the back of lobbying for a metro (and thus facilitating MTR’s expansion into the Australian market).

6. The mechanisms for heritage assessment and preservation, and stations design , are lacking in detail and commitment, and do not prioritise community input.

Australia has a short history of built heritage, and with dwindling stock, it is vital that protection is afforded to heritage homes, structures and streetscapes.

The exhibited project chose a reckless approach to heritage - no new assessments, demolition of many heritage items and degradation of many more, and failure to apply best practice relating to development in and around heritage areas and items. Hurlstone Park would have lost most of its heritage structures, and its heritage listing. Pre-fabricated “pods” would be installed and the front entrance would be reminiscent of some large take-away food chain. The Metro planners’ “visions” of “place-making” clearly had no place in our suburb.

It is a great relief to see that railway heritage has been considered in the preferred project and a and more measured approach is being taken. Also, the exclusion of incongruous prefabricated “pods” on platforms is sensible and should never have been considerable.

There are several outstanding concerns:

-the Appendix F report on heritage does not mention the existence of non-statutory lists such as the National Trust Register or the former Register for the National Estate. It does not mention or note draft heritage listings such as the heritage conservation areas (HCAs) proposed for Hurlstone Park.

-it does not comment on places affected by the proposed rezoning of land around each railway station to enable higher density redevelopment of the railway corridor.

-there is no suggestion that new heritage assessments should be undertaken for all affected areas to identify if there are any unlisted places which should be treated as heritage places

-the preferred project will still result in “moderate direct and visual impacts at 10 stations.” (Appendix F). The report reassures further states that no stations will lose their current state or local heritage listings. At Hurlstone Park, however the station group was recommended for State Heritage Listing. If the metro project precludes the possibility of state heritage listing for the Hurlstone Park Station group, then it is not a good outcome.

-in addition the historic character of the line will be “altered by the contemporary Metro infrastructure”. If the alteration is due to accessibility upgrades, this is acceptable BUT if it is due to Metro branding, it is totally unacceptable.

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).

The preferred infrastructure report contains little detail about station design apart from the intention to follow alternative guidelines with more expert advice, and demonstrate there has been community consultation (this alone is a great concern, given they thought consultation was satisfactory the first time around).

“Place- making” is a repeated catch-phrase, but it appears to have nothing to do with the communities that live in places.

7. There is a high and unacceptable risk to local character and liveability because of development triggered by the metro.

The response to multiple concerns about residential and retail development around stations, and in suburbs along the corridor generally, is disingenuous to say the least, given one of the intents is to trigger growth and development.

Concerns about development are consistently dismissed with phrases such as

“Transport for NSW is not proposing to deliver any residential developments, or over-station developments as part of this project. Any future development would be subject to a separate assessment and planning approval process”(p36, Part B, submissions report)

It does not matter WHO develops, it is the intent of the metro to force development onto communities anyway. The evidence for this is overwhelming and some examples are:

-the metro will act as a “catalyst for growth”

-the highly unpopular and poorly-conceived *Urban Renewal Strategy* for Sydenham-Bankstown is intrinsically linked to the metro conversion.

-the strategic context of the metro- involving various planning bodies such as GSC. Value capture is also part of the vision of Sydney's Future Transport Strategy 2056.

-priorities include integrating planning and transport, AND a "commercial focus on asset management" and "shared use of transport assets" which presumably means privatisation and value capture .

-the Planning Institute and Turf Club were invited as Stakeholders. The project will be approved by the Planning Minister. It is all about development.

-the newly formed Sydney Metro Authority will have greater land acquisition powers

In a recent Herald article, the metro/Development plan is already causing a great deal on anger in North Sydney with locals and the council who fear the state government's plans for their area will cause irreparable damage to street-scapes and access to sunlight in the public domain::

"Under the Transport Administration Amendment (Sydney Metro) Act 2018, the state-owned corporation Sydney Metro has two main objectives: delivering safe and reliable passenger services, and facilitating and carrying out the "orderly and efficient development of land in the locality of metro stations" "The NSW government has made it clear that the outcome of the integrated station development process will directly contribute to the funding of the Sydney Metro City & Southwest project, which has a budget range of \$11.5 billion to \$12.5 billion," a Sydney Metro spokesman said". The spokesman said the agency was committed to "making new metro stations and precincts welcoming and vibrant hubs that are integrated with the communities and the public spaces around them". (SMH 12 July 2018 accessed 14 July 2018)

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/space-metro-sunlight-north-sydney-committee-20180711-p4zqv.html>

-the likely operator, MTR Hong Kong, has a business model of "rail plus property".

It is disturbing to hear that Hong Kong's ex rail chief Anthony Cheng has warnings about MTR's monopoly on rail development:

"Hong Kong's railway operator should no longer be granted property development rights atop its new stations as the model only benefits investors and not the public, the city's ex-transport chief says."

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2154424/dont-give-rail-giant-mtr-corp-property-development-rights> (South China Morning Post, 10 July 2018, accessed 15 July 2018)

The Hong Kong model of development is not appropriate for the well-established heritage- rich and garden suburbs of the inner west south-west. Furthermore, these suburbs, such as Marrickville, Dulwich Hill, Hurlstone Park, Canterbury and Belmore are not slums in need of urban renewal; they each have unique characteristics that make them desirable places to live.

In addition, the metro/development plan runs the risk of an increasingly speculative housing market in the corridor which will only benefit a few - developers, investors, and those hoping for a windfall from selling to developers.

"A new paper from the lobby group the Tourism and Transport Forum, supporting the extension of Sydney's limited light rail network, cites examples in the United States where land values within 800 metres of mass transit have risen by as much as 120 per cent".

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/light-rail-to-push-up-house-prices-20100312-q469.html>(SMH 13 March 2010, accessed 12 July 2018).

In fact, the State Government set increasing property prices along the new light rail corridor as one of its KPIs to measure the project's success (as reported on the SMH 6th Dec 2017).

Property Advisers Curtis Associates says this:

"Sydney is the second least affordable city worldwide to buy property after Hong Kong. For many Sydney residential and commercial property buyers, investment in public transport infrastructure is therefore seen both as a significant opportunity not only to profit but also to hedge against the risk of falling property prices."

<https://www.curtisassociates.com.au/articles/the-sydney-metro/> 19th Feb 2018, accessed 16/7/2018

Whether the metro, MTR or GSC forces the growth, the intent of the metro is to lead to inappropriate development based on ideological bias, and the unique character and liveability of these vibrant inner west/south-west suburbs will be significantly reduced.

8. The response to multiple concerns about the nature and quality of community consultation missed the mark entirely.

The lack of meaningful community consultation was a recurring theme in submissions, and the response has failed to address concerns about the quality and transparency of information available to the public. That only 3% of submissions were supportive of the project reveals a startling lack of engagement.

Couched in quantitative terms, the response essentially ignored the complaints. The response simply listed and attempted to justify the consultation techniques used, and measured success by the "number of encounters".

Even measuring number of encounters did nothing to strengthen their case. For example, 316 people attended eight community information sessions. These were advertised on multiple platforms, held in accessible locations like local clubs, and lasted several hours. Compare this to the poorly-resourced Hurlstone Park Association getting more than 300 submissions over 2 Saturday mornings.

The response simply did 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.

In August 2016 Hurlstone Park's opposition to the metro was followed by a news storey on Channel 7 suggesting we would lose our railway station if we did not accept high-rise (Rod Staples, and then Planning Minister Rob Stokes appeared on this story).

(<https://au.news.yahoo.com/hurlstone-park-railway-station-to-close-after-120-years-of-service-32188216.htm>)

The Hurlstone Park commuters were also met, on a number of occasions, by metro representatives at the station, handing out simplistic propaganda on postcodes, whenever opposition was voiced.

These were devious tactics suited to an episode of *Utopia* and further reduced the trust between the public and the metro people.

The response also states that information was provided in "Plain English" to increase public understanding. I would liken this to an insurance policy in "plain English" - where you really need to read the fine print to detect the tricks and pitfalls.

tNSW still continues with its propaganda campaign. In the latest Preferred Infrastructure Report Overview we read on page 8:

"Sydney Metro - the facts" :

- "seating" - no mention of significantly reduced seats on each train

- "publicly owned" - no mention of a prorated operator

- "Beyond Bankstown" - no mention of loss of direct services and longer commute times

There can be no denying that consultation with communities has been done poorly, is being done poorly, and there appears to be no interest in doing it well.

9. The NSW Government has created a huge trust deficit between themselves and the community.

There appears to be a great lack of confidence in the project due to issues with governance, conflicts of interest, lack of transparency, poor engagement with communities and multiple issues with other projects such as legal issues, delays and cost- blow-outs.

The Preferred Infrastructure Report pares down many impacts of the exhibited project, which in the latter document were considered necessary and largely not negotiable, as options and alternatives had been considered (at great expense to the public given the use of multiple consultants). It seems remarkable, then that, leading up to the March 2019 election we found out that:

- Instead of major heritage impacts throughout, including the demolition of several of the heritage-listed and rare items, contrary to expert advice given, and wholesale demolition of heritage platforms, it has been decided that heritage items can be maintained
- the Exhibited Project's requirement for work, including demolition of 23 bridges and underpasses has been amended to no replacement of these!

It really is a tribute to the community who raised serious questions regarding the benefits to Sydney of the Metro conversion that the Exhibited Project has been so significantly pared back; I am still disturbed that these concessions are simply pre-election ploy, especially given:

- the project area (footprint) is essentially unchanged
- the preferred infra-structure report lacks significant detail, and allows for further changes once contracts are issued.

I am concerned about multiple conflicts of interest in the NSW Government and its planning and transport arms and I simply do not trust that this project has the public interest as its objective. Some of the concerns I have about trust in major decision makers for this and related projects include:

- the transport misleading the public, for example in the McFerry face affair
- the planning minister meeting with developer groups in preference to community groups (and more recently with a Chinese Property developer brokered by disgraced MP Daryl Maguire)
- members of the "independent" Heritage Council also representing bodies promoting growth (J Davis - Infrastructure NSW, D Dearing -, GSC)
- L Turnbull, GSC chief commissioner, and ex head of the Committee for Sydney, representing the big end of town-D Nelson -Deputy Secretary - Planning + Design at Department of Planning and Environment also a representative for the Planning Institute of Australia

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

As former Rail Corp and State Rail executives Ron Christie, Dick Day, Bob O'Loughlin and John Brew wrote to the government in 2015:

-the conversion of the Bankstown line to the Metro would remove “the relief valve for the network and will result in the network having no escape route.” They concluded that “Merely replacing one rail system with another when there is so much to be done is wasteful of limited resources”.

“Metro expansion should supplement heavy rail, not replace it.”

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