

North West Rail Link

Submission in response to Environmental Impact Statement 2 – Stations, Rail Infrastructure & Systems

Submitted to: NSW Dept of Planning & Infrastructure (DPI) **Date:** 30th November 2012

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- Michael Stuart, 4 Kenwick Lane, Beecroft;
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Basis of Submission:

We, the residents of Kenwick Lane, Beecroft listed above, jointly make this Submission for the attention of the NSW DPI in its planning for and supervision of the construction of the proposed North West Rail Line to travel between Epping Station and Cudgegong Road, Rouse Hill.

There are three main points we wish to make in this Submission:

1. The likely impact of noise and vibration on flora and fauna as well as residents in this area by trains travelling along the rail tunnels which pass directly beneath the Chilworth Conservation Reserve and our residences;
2. The opportunity to minimise noise impacts by the use of high attenuation equipment at the time of construction;
3. The impact of this project on possible sale of properties situated along the proposed route

1. Noise Impact

Kenwick Lane, Beecroft is a no through road, situated in a small gully, and ends at the edge of the Chilworth Conservation Reserve. Kenwick Lane and Chilworth Conservation Reserve represent one of the last remaining examples of Blackbutt Gully Forest in the Sydney Basin. As such, they contain many native fauna such as Powerful Owls and Eastern Water Dragons, along with a wide range of other at risk species. The Habitat of this flora and fauna is particularly sensitive to disturbance from noise and vibration.

The ambient noise level in this area, particularly in the evenings, is lower than most suburban areas in Sydney and nearby parts of Beecroft. Residents and visitors alike have

become accustomed to the peace and quiet of this location, where the noisiest disturbance is from parakeets, lorikeets and kookaburras during the day. There is very rare disturbance at night from heavy road vehicles, trains, aircraft or other forms of noise that other communities take for granted. In measuring the ambient noise currently experienced in our Lane, we have discovered that inside a house, at 9.30pm or after, with no TV or music being played, the decibel range varies from 30-40. With the addition of a train travelling underneath the properties, if this adds a further 35+ decibels to the background noise at night, this will be sufficient to disturb sleep and be disruptive.

It is important to note that the decibel rating system is a logarithmic scale, where an increase of 5db is large: TWICE the power is an increase of only 3db. From this, an increase of 6db is FOUR times the power of the noise. Therefore it is very important to the potential impact on residents that the approved acceptable noise level be reduced significantly.

The potential for disturbance for Kenwick Lane residents from trains travelling along the proposed tunnels underneath our homes is higher than for most other parts of the NW Rail Line. Such noise will impose itself to a greater degree than other forms of ambient noise in this location, particularly with the proposed frequency of trains using the tunnels.

We therefore believe that the recommended level of noise that is required to be reached before action can be required by the Contractor managing this rail infrastructure should be lower than is currently being proposed at 35dba.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That the noise level at which corrective action must be initiated by the Contractor be lowered from the currently proposed 35 dba to 25 dba to take account of the fact that a level of additional noise above 25 dba from the trains in the tunnels would impact significantly on the rare fauna and flora of the area and be an intrusion into the quality of life for residents in Kenwick Lane, Beecroft.

2. Use of High Attenuation connectors

From our observations and discussions at the Community Information Meeting at Epping Club on Thursday 22nd November 2012, it is our understanding that the DPI is proposing the use of three forms of rail attenuations for the length of the tunnel corridors for the NW Rail Line: standard, high and very high.

It is our understanding that the use of high or very high attenuation connections for the rail lines will reduce vibration and noise along these lines. This will be a very important feature for those residences directly above the rail tunnels.

In Kenwick Lane, a significant proportion of the two tunnels are at or slightly below 25 metres below our residences. It is our view that the full length of rail lines under all

residences in Kenwick Lane should make use of high attenuation connectors to reduce the potential impact of noise and vibration on the residences above.

We propose that a standard should be established for the construction of the whole rail tunnel corridors that any lengths of tunnels 30 – 25.1 metres below residential properties use high attenuation and any lengths of tunnels 25 metres or less should require the installation of very high attenuation connectors.

This should be done during construction of these rail lines to avoid subsequent delays and greater expense once the rail line is opened and noise and vibration levels are found to be higher than acceptable for residents in such locations, thereby requiring rectification measures.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That high attenuation connectors be used for the length of rail lines in both tunnels underneath all residences in Kenwick Lane, Beecroft.

3. Impact on Real Estate market

Residents of homes along the whole length of the proposed Tunnels for the NW Rail Line will be in a position where they will not realistically be able to sell their properties from now until the rail line is completed and operational, without being forced to lose significant value on the sale.

The level of uncertainty about the possible impact of the rail corridor on residences located directly above the tunnels will prevent most sales from occurring or require vendors to substantially reduce the asking price for their properties to achieve a sale.

With construction unlikely to commence before the beginning of 2015 and the rail line not scheduled to begin operation before 2019, current home owners along the length of the tunnel corridor face a delay of at least seven years before they will be able to sell their properties at proper market values.

We therefore seek to place on the record our intention to closely monitor the progress of construction of this rail line and reserve our rights to seek financial compensation should the reasonable market value of our properties be reduced or our capacity to realise the full value of our properties be negatively impacted because of delays in completion of this project.

We believe that this aspect of the impact of the N W Rail Project on local real estate sales and values should be independently monitored by the Real Estate Institute of NSW, through appointment by the NSW Government, to enable fair and reasonable compensation to be assessed and paid to those residents so affected.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That the NSW State Department of Infrastructure and Planning commission the Real Estate Institute of NSW to undertake ongoing research and analysis of the impact of the construction of the NW Rail Line, from December 2012 until the opening of the Line, on real estate sales of all buildings located above the rail tunnels to measure any loss of market value on these properties; such research and analysis to be publicly available to be used as the basis for determining fair and reasonable compensation for the parties so affected.

PLEASE NOTE:

- 1. We do NOT request privacy for this Submission**
- 2. We have NOT made any disclosable political donations in the last two years.**