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Personal Submission - Objection to the Chatswood-Sydenham Metro

Application No: SSI 15_4400

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1. Economic case

The Baird Government proposes overhauling laws surrounding biodiversity. As part of this process, the definition of “environmentally sustainable development” will include economic considerations.

Given the government has refused to release in full details of the costings of this project, I am opposed to it progressing.

The Baird Government cannot have their cake and eat it too.

I understand that costs have already blown out.

The public needs to be convinced of the economic benefit of this plan before it is allowed to proceed.

It is the height of arrogance to proceed with an ideologically-driven project without full disclosure of the business case to all taxpayers and their representatives.

Secondly, I believe the metro will be operated privately, for profit, yet the taxpayers of NSW are paying for its building.

According to the Sun Herald (26th June 2016) the Baird Government will spend \$12.6 million of tax-payers money on promoting the Metro.

2. Conflicts of interest

The media has brought to the attention of the public, donations from developers to the Liberal Party. Developers are going to be the big winners with the new Metro, especially if the “Hong Kong mode” prevails, which is more than likely. This will see major developments along the Metro Lines and possibly in the airspace above stations.

The benefits for developers are significantly multiplied by the “urban renewal strategies” that propose mass rezoning along the corridors involved.

Already developers are moving up the BRW rich list at an exponential rate.

Providing a station at Barangaroo, the site of Packer’s casino, is concerning, as the Packer family are also Liberal Party donors. Why the tax payers should fund such a station is questionable.

3. Ideological issues

The Metro Plan marries perfectly with the Liberal Party’s well-known opposition to unions and pushes their privatisation agenda forward.

I am opposed to a privately-operated rail system.

It also provides tax-payer funded infrastructure to developers in their pre-determined priority growth areas.

The Metro is being used as an excuse for inappropriate over-development.

I am also deeply suspicious at the cynical move by the Baird Government to simultaneously promote the Metro, plan mass rezoning along the lines and force council amalgamations onto concerned communities.

4. Technical, engineering and access issues.

This poorly-conceived plan involves the ripping up of current rail lines, and the remodelling existing railway platforms. It also includes the drilling of tunnels that will only fit the new system.

The new metro will not connect with the current rail system, and there will be little or not hope or reconnecting in the future.

The lack of integration with the existing transport network is short-sighted.

It appears that there has been little, if not any, consideration to simply improving capacity on existing lines, and adding connections where needed.

The capacity of the new system is also questionable, given double-decker trains will be replaced by single deck units.

5. Heritage Concerns

This is a major concern, especially as mass rezoning, to benefit a Metro operator and developers, is intrinsically linked to the plan.

The mass rezoning of areas along the corridor fails to significantly take into account the built and social heritage of each suburb. Compulsory acquisitions of properties will also occur.

In Haberfield, we have seen the destruction of beautiful Federation homes for the similarly controversial privately-run and costly West Connex.

This Government cannot be trusted to either appreciate or protect the built and social heritage of Sydney's suburbs, and the marriage of the Metro Plans with the Urban Renewal Strategies will spawn character-less high-rise slums in previously pretty residential areas.

The expert evidence for retaining the heritage character and unique suburbs of Sydney is overwhelming. Many experts have spoken openly on this issue, and in opposition to the Baird Government's "One size fits all" approach to urban planning, including Assoc Professor Elizabeth Farrelly, Professor John Landis and Dr Toni Recsei.

6. Wastage of existing resources and duplication

The remodelling of existing stations, platforms and lines is wasteful and has not been adequately justified. This is not a good model for sustainability.

There are also the plans for petitioned-off platforms, video surveillance and other technologies which will use power.

7. Poor planning of travel requirements

Leaving out St Peters and Erskineville stations will result in extra travel for people

wanting to go to or leave these areas. These areas are serviced quite well under the current system.

Currently the existing rail system from Bankstown to Sydenham and then to the city is underutilised. It is only busy and close to capacity at peak travel times and for some special events. In the middle of weekdays, and on the weekends, carriages are almost empty and platforms pretty much abandoned. The DPE has claimed that the Sydenham-Bankstown corridor is one of the most densely populated in Sydney, yet the Rail system is hardly used outside of peak times. The case for the Metro is not convincing. Having trains running every few minutes when there are few commuters is a terrible waste of power. Simply increasing peak services would suffice.

8. Lack of consideration of alternatives

Instead of ripping up rail lines that already exist, improving public transport along Parramatta Road should be a priority.

The light rail from Dulwich Hill to the City, for example, has been an excellent addition and did not face the level of opposition seen in relation to the Metro.