

Dr Mehreen Faruqi
Greens Member of the NSW Legislative Council



SUBMISSION TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SYDNEY METRO STAGE 2 (CHATSWOOD-SYDENHAM)

27 June 2016

To the Planner,

I provide the following submission to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of Sydney Metro City & Southwest (Chatswood-Sydenham component) in my capacity as the Greens NSW spokesperson for Transport. Jenny Leong, Greens MP for Newtown, has provided a separate submission outlining her own concerns about the project in relation to her electorate.

While the Greens are strong supporters of public transport and world-class urban rail services, we remain highly concerned about the justification for, and the transport impacts of, the Sydney Metro project. This submission will highlight our broad concerns with the project. We acknowledge that as the project progresses, we may have further comments on specific aspects of the rollout.

I note the relatively short period of time allowed to provide submissions to the EIS. The 1,369 page Main Volume and related documents comprise a significant amount of information on this major \$12 billion project. The EIS was released on 11 May 2016, with submissions due on 27 June 2016 – less than seven weeks later. We request that in the future, more time is given for public comment on significant projects of this nature.

General concerns and transport project prioritisation

In total, the Sydney Metro Northwest and Sydney Metro City & Southwest projects will cost around \$20 billion. Regardless of whether these projects are worthwhile or not, this is a once-in-a-generation public transport investment. It is alarming to see such a huge allocation of state money spent on a transport project that will not address the limiting 'radial' design of the Sydney rail network, instead opting for a solution that (with the exception of the extension out to the north west area) largely duplicates and builds over existing lines that go into and out of the Central Business District.

While a \$20 billion public transport investment will inevitably lead to some improvement in access for a portion of the population in Sydney, we must put this in perspective given the sheer quantity of resources dedicated to this single project. We must question the value for money.

The 2016-17 Budget allocates a further \$6.2 billion to the Sydney Metro City & Southwest over the forward estimates period.¹ I note that despite a significant budgetary commitment, the project continues to lack both a public business case and a cost-benefit analysis. The EIS allocates a total of three pages out of 1,369

¹ NSW Budget Papers, Infrastructure Statement 2016-17, p. 1-5.



to a discussion of the rail network alternatives to the Sydney Metro. Therefore, the release of the business case and cost-benefit analysis that assess the various alternatives is now urgent.

Sydney Metro City & Southwest (Chatswood to Bankstown) will cost approximately \$12 billion. It is therefore concerning that as part of this project, Sydney public transport users will have access to only five new train stations: Crows Nest, Victoria Cross, Barangaroo, Pitt Street, and Waterloo. This averages to \$2.4 billion per new station, which is more than the entire cost of the last major train expansion (the \$2.3 billion Chatswood to Epping line, completed in 2009), which was at that point the most expensive rail line built in the history of New South Wales and had three new stations.

The other 14 stations included in Sydney Metro City & Southwest already exist – Chatswood (connects with Sydney Metro Northwest), Martin Place, Central, Sydenham, Marrickville, Dulwich Hill, Hurlstone Park, Canterbury, Campsie, Belmore, Lakemba, Wiley Park, Punchbowl, and Bankstown – and will either be expanded to encompass metro services or, for the most part, replaced with infrastructure that is compatible with the metro. It is misleading for the government to claim it will deliver “31 metro stations” through Sydney Metro Northwest and City & Southwest when a majority of these stations are simply expanded or converted existing stations.²

We do not deny the costs of building underground twin tunnels, including underneath Sydney Harbour, but it must be acknowledged that if our end goal for developing the rail network is to expand access to as many people as possible, the \$12 billion Sydney Metro City & Southwest is a questionable investment, made even more dubious since no detailed analysis has been presented.

Development and transport planning

The failure of Sydney Metro to expand rail access to new parts of the city leads to the question of what agendas are driving its construction. Plans for high-density development around Sydney Metro stations have been the source of ongoing community and professional planning concern. Certainly, rail lines should be built to maximise patronage and along corridors of high populations. However, the desire for more and denser urban development opportunities and increasing population densities should not drive transport planning.

The decision not to build a station in Artarmon Industrial Area between Chatswood and Crows Nest, for instance, must be critiqued. There is currently an exceptionally long distance between Chatswood and Crows Nest metro stations. It would make sense to build in the Artarmon Industrial Area and further expand transport access, though the EIS admits that “the benefits ... are dependent on the realization of urban renewal opportunities in the area. However, consultation with major stakeholders indicated that there was limited support for such a major land use change.”³ In other words, the limited capacity for development around the station prevented the station from being pursued, even though it would have improved access for the many people who work in this area.

In December 2015, it was announced that the government would build a metro station at Waterloo rather than at Sydney University. While there was much more capacity for patronage at Sydney University, Waterloo was reportedly chosen due to it offering the opportunity to build thousands of new apartments in

² EIS Summary, page 6.

³ EIS, page 67.

that area.⁴ As part of these plans, public housing will be converted to mixed-housing with many public housing tenants forced to relocate while construction is ongoing. The justification for how these crucial transport decisions were made must be made public.

Transport integration

The Greens also have ongoing concerns about the impact of the separation of the Sydney Metro network from the Sydney Trains network on the long term integration of public transport in the city.

The Environmental Impact Statement views this separation as a positive – pointing to its status as a “stand-alone line operating independently of the existing rail network, not subject to wider suburban delays”.⁵ However, this ignores that if problems do occur on the metro, its isolation from the Sydney Trains network may prove to be a hindrance. The metro is, by the government’s own admission, a line, not a network.

When the metro is completed, 31 stations, from Cudgegong Road to Bankstown, will serve the single-deck metro network, while the rest continue to serve double-deck Sydney Trains rolling stock. Moreover, the networks will be run by different operators, with the Sydney Metro to be privately operated by MTR Corporation.

I have been advised by the government that the \$276 million Sydney Trains Rail Operations Centre at Green Square, due to be opened in 2018, will not operate services on Sydney Metro Northwest. Nor, presumably, will it operate services on the entire Sydney Metro. The metro operator is instead building a centralised operations control centre for the overall management, control and monitoring of operations in Rouse Hill.⁶

The government must justify this lack of integration, particularly given that the reasoning for the new Green Square centre is to ensure that “all facets of the train network are controlled from a single location, with new technology to manage train movements and customer safety.”⁷ While the tracks are separated, metro and double-deck trains will share some of the same stations and infrastructure, meaning that integration of controls is desirable from both safety and efficiency perspectives.

Is the end goal of this separation to break off and privatise parts of the network? A freedom of information request found 97 documents relating to the privatisation of Sydney trains and buses that were refused to be released. The government must be open and transparent about its future plans for ownership and operation of public transport in New South Wales.

Environmental and community impacts

Constructing the line from Chatswood to Sydenham, including twin tunnels underneath Sydney Harbour, will inevitably have environmental impacts. I note that local environments and residences will be affected by construction works in areas such as Blues Point, Chatswood and Marrickville, including through compulsory

⁴ Jacob Saulwick, “Revealed: how and why housing at Waterloo beat Sydney Uni for a rail station” (29 January 2016) <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/revealed-how-and-why-housing-at-waterloo-beat-sydney-uni-for-a-rail-station-20160128-gmg18x.html>

⁵ EIS Summary, page 6.

⁶ Question on Notice, ‘Transport Management Centre’ (26 April 2016) <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/pages/qanda-tracking-details.aspx?pk=232252>

⁷ Media Release, ‘New nerve centre to reduce train commuter delays (2 March 2016) <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/new-nerve-centre-reduce-train-commuter-delays>

property acquisitions. I encourage the government to plan this in the most environmentally sensitive way possible, and listen to residents about their needs and concerns. The current government has a poor track record in managing both environmental impacts and community consultation in respect of projects such as WestConnex and the CBD and South East Light Rail.

For instance, the EIS notes that the Blues Point temporary site will be established within approximately 2,100 square metres of Blues Point Reserve, and indicates that the space will be required for Sydney Metro works for over two years. Shaft excavation alone will evidently take up the entirety of 2019.⁸ It is somewhat alarming that a full six months have been dedicated to rehabilitation for the reserve land after work is completed.

The Reserve is a treasured part of Sydney, providing prime waterfront public space for the people of the city to enjoy. The government must explore other options for the establishment of a construction site for the metro. Regardless of where this construction site is, planning and construction should be undertaken to minimise any environmental damage.

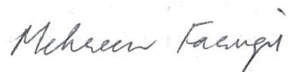
Conclusions

New South Wales currently has the opportunity to invest in public transport projects that expand access for people and improve the quality of everyone's lives. I am not convinced that Sydney Metro will achieve these ends.

The Greens support public transport projects that are driven by the desire to make transport more equitable, sustainable, and community-focused. Instead, the Sydney Metro appears to be driven by privatisation, overdevelopment, and undercutting the organised workforce of the Sydney rail network.

I am deeply concerned about the value and long-term impact of this \$12 billion investment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission.



Dr Mehreen Faruqi MLC
Greens NSW Transport spokesperson

⁸ EIS, page 220.