

Tracy Bellamy - Rail noise and health impacts

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To: "plan_comment@planning.nsw.gov.au" <plan_comment@planning.nsw.gov.au>
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Subject: Rail noise and health impacts

The Director, Infrastructure Projects, Epping to Thornleigh Third Track – SSI 5132
 NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure
 GPO Box 39 Sydney 2001
 (sent as email)

This is with regard to noise levels from train movements in residential areas like Beecroft, and further worsening of the situation under the proposed plans. Please note that I have no objection to the track extension as such – I understand the value of transport infrastructure and the benefits of rail over alternatives – but I am concerned that impacts like the above are not being addressed with a view to resolving them adequately.

My family and I have been residents of Sutherland Road Beecroft since 2000 and have been affected by the increasing level of noise from wheel squeals from freight trains. The problem is with regard to both frequency and intensity of this noise. I am deeply concerned that rather than take the opportunity to address an already existing and worsening problem, it appears that the project mentioned above will make matters even worse, and what's more, the publicly available information suggests that this is seen as acceptable by planning authorities.

Further, between the agencies responsible for such projects, the permanent way operations, and the rolling stock operators, there is already a significant lack of clarity on who is responsible for this situation. This issue of accountability is also being made worse by the advent of this project plan.

I have studied the information provided in the Environmental Impact Statement and the IGANRIP standards referred therein. In particular, Technical Paper II as well as Page 188 – 189 of the main report makes it clear that a number of regions, including Area 7 East which is of specific interest to me, will be negatively impacted. I would like to bring to your attention the following:

- Noise levels already exceed the standards for maximum if not average noise levels, and with the project, the average will also be exceeded.
- Present noise levels are already impacting residents' health, and me and my family in particular have been living with worsening instances of loud screeching at all times of the day. This affects sleep as well as hearing most obviously, and is likely to have more long term impacts on health and well-being as well.
- Current as well as proposed noise levels may appear to only marginally exceed the standards, because a key measure which also creates impact – frequency of train pass-by events – is not measured and managed. In addition, with a logarithmic scale like decibels, what looks like a small difference may in fact have quite an impact.
- While in theory frequency of pass-by will impact on the average, which is tracked, there are significant periods of very low noise such that the impact on the average in itself will not be an adequate measure. The fact that Lmax is measured at the 95th percentile as per the standard, may also make matters worse by leaving out the worst-offending pass-by events out of the study

altogether.

- Measures that could be taken to address the core issue of wheel squeal appear to have been dismissed (dampers, pad stiffness, gradient, signal location, barriers) for various reasons.

I request your attention to matter so that:

- between the project, track operators and train operators there is clear accountability on who will address this situation
- this agency is made to incorporate frequency of pass-by as a measure which needs to be managed, or to run significantly quieter trains - ideally both - they certainly cannot shrug their shoulders at either option as they are doing at present
- this agency is made to address the core issue of wheel squeal at source; and
- I may receive a response specific to these concerns and without confounding the core issue with technical jargon.

Yours sincerely,

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