

**Tracy Bellamy - Epping to Thornleigh Third Track Project - Reference SSI 5132 - submission and feedback**

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**Date:** 2/11/2012 2:56 PM  
**Subject:** Epping to Thornleigh Third Track Project - Reference SSI 5132 - submission and feedback  
**Attachments:** Epping to Thornleigh Train Track Proposal-v2.docx

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To the ETTT Program Office,

Please find attached our submission in regards to the Epping to Thornleigh Third Track Project - Reference SSI 5132 for your consideration and response.

*Kindest regards*

*Peter Ager*

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**Subject: Epping to Thornleigh Third Track Proposal (Application No. SSI 5132)**

**Submission prepared by:**

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**Subject: Epping to Thornleigh Third Track Proposal (Application No. SSI 5132)**

**We object to the ETTT proposal in its present form** and it should be rejected for the following reasons-

**1. Lack of sound walls to prevent the spread of freight noise pollution to surrounding suburbs.**

The noise generated from freight trains coming from Beecroft to Pennant Hills and progressing to Thornleigh is now clearly heard in Bellamy Street, Pennant Hills (over 750 metres from the station). The new freight line to be built on the western side of the existing line will spread this noise pollution even further. As both houses and shops front this new freight line, many will be much closer to the rail line than before (e.g. Wongala Crescent, Beecroft and Yarrara Road, Pennant Hills).

Without adequate sound walls the noise will be excessive. Sound walls must be constructed along this new freight line, as sound walls have already been placed approaching Hornsby station, as well as at Artarmon, Roseville and Chatswood ( no freight trains use this line) when new lines were constructed in these areas. As this is a new freight line where the noise level from freight trains is much greater than passenger trains and it will be regularly used at night to move freight, sound walls must be constructed.

**2. Increase in air and noise pollution from idling diesels outside Pennant Hills station.**

With the freight line holding point changing from Epping to outside Pennant Hills station, idling diesels waiting to take freight through to Hornsby will significantly increase both air and noise pollution in the Pennant Hills area. Diesel spills from freight trains (which are clearly seen on the tracks at Normanhurst) will also add to this pollution, as there are no clean-up and recovery plans available outlining how these diesel spills will be cleaned up when they occur.

The air and noise pollution is already excessive in this area due to high volumes of traffic on Pennant Hills Road and Yarrara Road. No further pollution is needed as no one will be compensated for any impacts on their health or to the local environment.

### **3. No benefit to local train commuters with the introduction of the ETTT.**

Improved reliability of passenger rail services is listed as a benefit of the ETTT but this is false for the Main Northern Line passengers. The ETTT is being built purely as the existing line "severely limits the priority and movement of freight" (ETTT Overview, p.6) and "each project has some localised benefit for freight transport" (ETTT Overview, p.4).

No mention is made of resolving infrequent and unreliable commuter services, which will become significantly worse with the introduction of the North West Rail link (commuters from Normanhurst to Cheltenham will need to catch three trains to get to the city). After discussions with representatives at the Pennant Hills community session only Gosford, Newcastle and Countrylink services will use and benefit from the ETTT.

### **4. No improvements to be made to poorly designed and dangerous Beecroft station**

The stairs to Beecroft station are broken, slippery and dangerous and with no lift access many commuters are forced to use Cheltenham or Pennant Hills station. Furthermore, the large gap between the platform and trains, which CityRail is aware of due to guards regularly warning commuters of it, needs to be rectified.

Whilst the station building c. 1914 has historical significance at a local level, being a good example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century railway station design, the platform is not and needs to be made level with the floor of the train cars. Gravel has constantly been placed on the track with no lowering of the track occurring.

The booking office also remains in its original condition and is in need of thorough restoration with lift access made available. Beecroft has seen minimal changes (additional shelter and asphalt on the platform) in the past 50 years.

Why is this station being neglected? According to the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 requirements, the station platform areas should be re-graded so they are level with the floor of the train cars and slope away from the track (ETTT Overview, p.9 ). When will Beecroft station meet these requirements as it is 2012?

Why not use the opportunity while constructing the ETTT to make Beecroft station safe. Lowering the track height by removing old gravel or realigning the platform edge which should be done if the ETTT is to proceed allowing the station to meet the disability requirements. I am sure if this station was in western Sydney the money would be spent to rectify it.



**5. No improvements to inadequate car parking at Beecroft and Cheltenham station.**

Whilst no car park spaces will be removed by the ETTT as car parks will be re-located, however both will be further away from the stations than they are now. As no new car parks have been built on the Main Northern Line in the past 15 years it is time the car parks at both stations be upgraded and multi-decked.

Many new or upgraded station car parks have been built in western and south western Sydney during this time, so money is obviously not a problem. Even stations such as Revesby, where commuters do not use their new car park, have had multi deck car parks completed.

Why should the people in Beecroft, Cheltenham and surrounding suburbs have to put up with the inconvenience, noise and pollution from the ETTT and have nothing done to improve and expand station car parking as a key requirement to be undertaken by the ETTT? At least the people in Pennant Hills, Beecroft, Cheltenham and surrounding suburbs would use their car parks and not leave them empty (e.g. Revesby).

**6. No re-alignment of the track between Cheltenham, Beecroft and Pennant Hills to prevent the constant wheel / flange squeal of freight and passenger trains.**

With several noise monitors recording wheel/flange squeal already located on the line between Cheltenham and Beecroft, and Beecroft and Pennant Hills, the noise level generated by badly aligned tracks is well documented.

If more freight trains are going to use the ETTT without sound walls, then major re-alignment of the new ETTT and the existing track should be done while building the ETTT. It is futile to build a new track with the same alignment that exists now unless sound walls are built the entire length of the ETTT, especially as it will be much closer to residential areas.

**7. No compensation or replacement for the removal of most of Beecroft children's playground, community gardens and gardens and seats in Yarrara Road, Pennant Hills.**

The bushland and the park to the west of Beecroft station provides an attractive setting for the station and assists to maintain the historic character of the station. The Beecroft-Pennant Hills bushland corridor comprises a remnant of native forest.

The site contains many mature indigenous trees (some of which have recently been cleared) including Bluegums, Blackbutt and Grey Ironbark, as well as more recent plantings. While some areas of land are under the ownership of Railcorp they have been maintained over many years by Hornsby Council and community groups.

The Beecroft children's playground has had play equipment replaced, while the community gardens have been maintained complete with picnic tables and chairs. Hornsby Council has also maintained landscaping, paving and seats in Yarrara road, Pennant Hills.

As most of these areas will disappear with the ETTT, at no time has any compensation for the removal of the playground equipment, paving and seats in Beecroft and Pennant Hills and the bushland been considered. If any of the playground and gardens, are left after the completion of the ETTT, the noise from the freight trains without sound walls being built will render the areas useless.

At no time has compensation or replacement of these community areas been considered. The screen planting along the rail corridor and the native trees in the area between the rail corridor and Yarrara Road that will be left after the ETTT has been completed will be minimal.

If the same work, with the related destruction of playgrounds and community gardens occurred in western Sydney compensation would be expected, with other areas found immediately to accommodate a new playground and gardens at no cost to the local council.

Appropriate compensation must also be given equally to all areas of Sydney, including those involved with the ETTT or the proposal should be rejected. Enough money is available for the ETTT to properly compensate suburbs and communities on the Main Northern line that will be adversely affected, so spend it where it is needed, instead of always redirecting it to areas in western Sydney, just to keep votes.

## **8. No consideration of cumulative impacts of concurrent projects on commuters from Cheltenham to Hornsby.**

With the construction of the ETTT and the North West Rail link commuters from Cheltenham to Normanhurst will be significantly disadvantaged. Not only will freight trains dominate the Main Northern line but any commuters from Normanhurst to Cheltenham will need to catch three trains to get to the city because of the poorly designed and short-sightedness of the North West Rail link.

No consideration has been given to the cumulative impact of these concurrent projects on commuters on this section of the Main Northern line. Major disruption will occur with the



construction of the ETTT for absolutely no benefit to Main Northern line commuters as no extra passenger services or improved timetables will result.

Any improvement expected by the introduction of the North West Rail link has been removed by these trains being a single deck design, necessitating the redesigning of the Epping to Chatswood tunnel to suit these carriages, leaving Main Northern line trains no longer able to use this line to the city.

Changing trains three times to get to the city is not an option, as it will make traffic on Pennant Hills road and the M2 heading to the city worse than it is already. If the Epping to Chatswood line is no longer viable then trains should return to Epping via Strathfield to the city (with a much improved timetable) to allow commuters from Normanhurst to Cheltenham to reach the city or else stop the Gosford trains at each of these stations to allow commuters simpler travel to the city.

No improvements have occurred for commuters either in new improved timetables, better railway stations with lift access or rail car parks have occurred from Normanhurst to Cheltenham in over 15 years.

It is clearly evident that any rail improvements on the Main Northern line are not for commuters but for freight trains and the convenience of other commuters, such as the North West Rail link, central coast and northern passenger services.

The ETTT, unless some benefits are given to those commuters from Normanhurst to Cheltenham who use the Main Northern Line on a daily basis, should be rejected. It is a short term (reaching capacity in 2028) poorly designed proposal which only minimally benefits freight transport.