

24th June 2020

Director, Transport Assessments
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

Response to Sydney Metro West Environmental Impact Statement

I am writing on behalf of the owners of 35 Grand Avenue and 2-8 Thackery Street, Camelia, in response to the exhibition of the above project.

The Government is commended for their vision and commitment to improving public transport in the greater Parramatta area and we welcome this project being prioritised as an economic stimulus project. However, we would welcome the government reconsidering the option for a metro station at Camelia. The distance between the proposed stations at Olympic Park and Parramatta is over 7km which is a considerable gap and the largest spacing on the Western Metro.

While the EIS did canvas Camelia as an option we do not believe the weighting and methodology used by the Department was as detailed and comprehensive as it could have been. We also think that some of the key benefits of a station at Camelia were not given sufficient weight and some were overlooked completely. Perhaps more importantly, the EIS has not taken into consideration recent changes in both government policy and land use along the route.

Contamination: The EIS rightly identifies land contamination as an issue for Camelia. Indeed, this area, and the waterways surrounding it – Parramatta and Duck Rivers – are some of the most contaminated environments in Australia having been home to some toxic industries for most of the past 150 years. This contamination should be cleaned up. In 2020 it is just not acceptable to have such a polluted precinct left to continue contaminating the waterways leading to Sydney Harbour.

This contamination is cited in the EIS as a major constraint on activating the precinct by including a metro station at Camelia. This is incorrect. Successive studies from both State and Local Government agencies have found that this contamination can only be economically remediated, and the environment restored, through a substantial redevelopment of the whole precinct. This is how many of the other contaminated sites along the Parramatta River, such as the Union Carbide factory, Olympic Park and Camelia Junction, were rehabilitated. However, a substantial redevelopment of Camelia is only possible through the enabling infrastructure and connectivity provided by a Metro station.

Employment: The contamination issue is also the reason why Camelia has underperformed as an employment/industrial precinct and why it will never be a major centre for manufacturing and logistics. The contamination makes a more substantial intensification of industrial activities uneconomically and this is the principle reason why the area has continually declined as a centre for employment in recent decades. Notwithstanding the aspirations of the Greater Sydney Commission for the Camelia precinct to retain its industrial zone, it will never be a centre for manufacturing or urban services while it remains so heavily contaminated.

However, the precinct could become a major centre for both employment and residential if it were better connected to wider metropolis with a metro station. The precinct has not been subdivided into small lots and does not contain any significant constraints such as flooding or heritage. With the right planning it could quickly attract the investment needed to create a vibrant mixed-use centre capable of providing much needed employment for the greater Parramatta area.

For these reasons we believe that the contamination issue is actually a reason in favour of a station at Camelia.

Other station options have less merit:

We understand and support the need to balance a faster transit time between Parramatta and the CBD and the number of precincts a metro can activate. We accept that there is a difficult trade off between the number of stations along the route and the aspiration for a 30-minute Sydney. However, we do not believe the EIS has got this balance right.

In particular we see the choice of a station at the Bays over Camelia as a mistake. The EIS assessment of the Bays was based on masterplanning undertaken by Urban Growth in 2015 which assumed redevelopment of the precinct could only be activated if a metro station were included on the Western Metro. This assessment was questionable at the time but has now been shown to be completely false.

The eastern half of the Bays precinct (fish markets and Blackwattle Bay) has now been approved for redevelopment and construction is to start soon. This development will proceed whether a metro station is built or not. The capacity for the western half of the Bays precinct to be activated has now also been significantly curtailed by the expanded Westconnex interchange which has sterilised most of the White Bay stabling yards. The residue of precinct - White Bay and Glebe Island - also has significant development constraints, including significant heritage items which cannot be removed, and landside access difficulties. Finally, unlike Camelia, White Bay is a particularly productive and highly valuable industrial area. It is the only remaining industrial zoned land adjacent to the deep-water port on Sydney Harbour. It caters for several critically important industries such as

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ferry and charter boat refuelling, overflow space for cruise ships, chandlers as well as housing Australia's heritage fleet.

For these reasons, a station at White Bay is likely to be an underutilised and expensive, white elephant, and should be reconsidered.

We would welcome the opportunity of discussing this matter further and would be grateful if you could keep us informed of your deliberations. Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on **0417 238 212**.

Yours sincerely

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