

Sydney International Speedway

Submission by Rick Banyard

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Introduction

Motorsport is a very popular activity worldwide and is sure to continue even as automotive technology. The introduction of e racing is an example of the demand for motorsport.

The sport of dirt track and asphalt automobile and motorcycle racing in Australia on small, enclosed, circular tracks can be traced, in embryonic form at least, to the 1900's. The first motorbike race was in Maitland in 1908. It was during the 1920's that it really became popular with the first of the World's famous tracks opening at places such as Maitland (1923) , Newcastle (1924) and Sydney Showground (1915) in NSW, Wayville Showground in SA, Claremont Showground in WA, Kardinia Park and Melbourne Exhibition in Vic and the Brisbane Exhibition in Qld.

After Maitland, Newcastle Showground is the second oldest Motorcycle Speedway track in the world and one of the World's first oval track dirt car speedways. However, the first Australian Motorcycle Speedway Championship was held at Newcastle Showground in 1926.

Speedway's popularity grew rapidly and in the 1960's the Sydney Region had major speedways at Sydney Showground, Windsor, Liverpool, and Westmead all functioning regularly and all attracted large family crowds to watch speedway cars and speedway

bikes. Weekly crowds were over 100,000. There were also a considerable number of other tracks in Sydney plus a large number of rural venues.

The need to close the Valvoline Raceway at Granville is regrettable due to its popularity and history however it is the Government's decision. I acknowledge the Government's commitment to develop, at its cost, a replacement. The Valvoline Raceway is by no measure a world standard speedway. It is an old converted trotting track that fans have simply grown to live with. A replacement venue will need to be bigger, better, contain new features and importantly be financially viable.

I respect that Sydney Metro understands the passion for the sport held by competitors and fans alike and that it has worked closely with Sydney Dragway as well as industry experts and former competitors to propose a speedway that will be exciting for the fans to watch and drivers to race on - and includes the latest in safety equipment and spectator facilities.

I note the claim that the new Sydney International Speedway will deliver:

- A new world-class clay-based racetrack for both speedway cars and motorcycles including sprint, wingless sprint, street stockers, V8 dirt modified and Formula 500 cars
- A new grandstand and terraced seating to accommodate up to 7000 spectators
- Public amenities, corporate boxes, food, beverage and merchandise outlets
- Dedicated parking for speedway competitors and spectators
- Additional overflow parking with flexibility to be used for dragway events
- Dual access to the precinct by creating new vehicle access to the speedway pit area via a new intersection built off Ferrers Road
- A dedicated competitor pit area to service the speedway
- Workshops, garages and trackside support services.

I have been involved with speedway predominantly as a spectator for almost 70 years. As a child my family attended speedway very regularly and I have followed on. I have attended most significant tracks, both extinct and presently operating, in Australia and many in the United States. I have also supported other forms of motorsport and have been a competitor, official and sponsor.

I have also been involved with two motorsport complex developments.

From this base **I oppose the proposal as presented in the EIS.**

Reasoning

I support my opposition with the following reasons:-

1. Size and Scale

The proposed speedway is simply not large enough to fulfil the role of a major international speedway in the capital of Australia's largest State.

The EIS notes that there are 1.7m people that reside within 30 kms of the proposed venue.

It should also be noted that there are about 5m people within 3hrs driving distance of the proposed SIS.

The first measure of size must be capacity to accommodate spectators. The following table shows the historic crowds that speedway has attracted in NSW over the last 98 years.

Speedway Attendance numbers

Speedway	Location	Capacity	Actual Attendance	Date
Valvoline Raceway	NSW	10,000	3500 seated in grandstand 6500 on grass area etc	
Newcastle Motordrome	NSW	15,000	12,500	
Maitland	NSW	15,000	6000 15,000	Tues 28 Jan 1926 9 March 1926

Sydney Showground	NSW	50,000	30,000 (common)	
Westmead	NSW		20,000	1960
Liverpool	NSW	25,000	20,000	
Windsor	NSW		10,000	1964
Sydney Sportsground	NSW	14,000	10,000	1945

The proposed SIS venue according to the EIS will only accommodate 7000 people of which about half (3600) will be grandstand seated.

This statistic compares very unfavourably with other tracks not only in NSW but elsewhere:-

Murray Bridge	SA	8,000	7,000
Rowley Park	SA	15,000	
Warrnambool	Vic	10500	
Avalon	Vic	10000	
Rockhampton	Qld	9000	8000 (major grandstand)
Toowoomba	Qld		1000 vehicle car park
Claremont	WA	20000	20,000

By American and World standards our dirt track attendance is very small. There are over 700 dirt track speedways in the USA. Many of these tracks are in very small communities. It is common to be able to locate and operating speedway event within reasonable driving distance every night of the week during the speedway season.

Many of the European bike speedways attract a greater following than does Soccer.

Knoxville	USA		21,135 seated	
Eldora	USA		17,782 seated	
Wembley	England		85,000	1951
Wasaw	Poland		54,000	2019
Ipswich (Foxhall)	England	10,000	10,000 common sellout	2019

If the Sydney International Speedway (SIS) is to be rated as world class and to host major State, National and International events then it must be capable of holding a minimum of 25,000 spectators.

It is noted that the Drag way located next door has a capacity of 50,000 people with drag racing capable of accommodating 20,000 spectators. This is the only active drag way in NSW and by comparison with speedway has a very low participation rate.

The EIS quotes very low attendance figures for Valvoline Raceway with numbers in the 1500 to 4000 range. As a very regular attendee it would seem to me that this is a serious understatement with the numbers much more likely to be in the 3500 to 8000 range. Understating the crowd size has serious impacts on the traffic, parking, catering and amenities calculations.

The attendance at Valvoline Raceway is held back by its inability to cater for all the classes of cars involved in speedway. Sprintcars are a specialist very expensive form of dirt circuit race car and have specific spectator demand. Valvoline does not race bikes due to the track surface not being suitable. The curfew, limited parking and other site restrictions also limit crowds. A new purpose built venue must address these impediments and as such must be capable of handling greater crowds and competitors. A "like for like" replacement will only mimic the shortcomings of Valvoline Raceway.

2. Pit Area

The pit area as proposed is totally inadequate for the conduct of all but minor events.

Due to the fact that there is little or no parking outside of the pits for transporters, drivers, pit crews and pit facility personnel the pit area will need to be capable of holding all the vehicles, all the drivers and all the pit crews.

The pit area also needs specialist suppliers, merchandisers, catering and amenities. These people need space to function.

Twenty Pit garages also seems totally inadequate.

Race transporters are commonly mobile workshops, accommodation areas, spare parts stores and an integral part of the race teams pit presence. The space occupied is far greater than just the transporter itself. Typically the space occupied by the driver, the four pit crew members, the race car etc would be equivalent to four times the area of the transporter.

A basic speedway night would commonly have six classes of races with an average of 18 competitors in each class. Each speedway race can have up to 24 cars starting the race.

A big night of speedway would commonly have six classes of races with an average of 25 competitors in each class.

T big sprint car field can have 50 competitors present. Even a demolition derby can have 50 or more starters.

Track plant and equipment, emergency vehicles and service vehicles would also need accommodation. The following table suggests the spaces required:-

Vehicle spaces	Basic night		Big night	
Race cars (1 space)	108	(108)	150	(150)
Semi trailers (3 spaces)	25	(75)	40	(120)
Large Trucks (2 spaces)	35	(70)	60	(120)
Small Trucks (1.5 spaces)	20	(30)	30	(45)
Tow vehicle + trailer (2.5 spaces)	20	(50)	30	(75)
Competitor Support vehicles (2.5 spaces)	50	(125)	65	(162.5)

Competitor service vehicles (1.5 spaces)	10 (15)	18 (27)
Track service vehicles (1.5 spaces)	25 (37.5)	30 (45)
Track Plant (2 spaces)	5 (10)	5 (10)
Emergency Vehicles (2 spaces)	5 (10)	6 (12)
Minimum Total Car space equivalents required in the pit area	531	1297

Added to the minimum car space equivalent must be an allowance for people movements, vehicle preparation and repairs, manoeuvrability, the dummy grid and travel to and from the track.

The pit area as set out in the EIS “*150 parking bays for race vehicles and their tenders, including 20 bays for heavy vehicles transporting racing vehicles*” would seem to be less than required and thus will not permit the track to operate as NSW’s major facility.

3. Spectator Facilities

Whilst the EIS suggests that there has been consultation with stakeholder bodies there is no reference to the output of those meeting or how the views and requirements of spectators were assessed and importantly built into the proposed development.

There is absolutely no evidence of spectators being considered as stakeholders. This is totally unacceptable.

I believe the key elements of spectator requirements have been totally missed and I make the following comments;-

- Spectators tend to attend speedway as a family activity with typical crowds including babies through to over 80’s
- Spectators commonly have direct links to competitors

- Spectator groups can vary from large (20 or more) to single people.
- Spectators attend for the social outing, the sport of dirt track speedway and for entertainment.
- Spectators are attracted by value for money (dollars per hour) that speedway provides compared with other entertainment.

The design in the EIS and graphics package does not respect the demand characteristics of spectators.

- Families like to spread out on the grass banks in order that they can move about, let the children play and run about and adopt the style of seating that meets their needs. It also allows for strollers and other special needs. How will the kids roll down the grass slopes?
- Spectators like to enjoy the crowd and the speedway family. To this end the major walkway trackside is of significant importance. The proposed design has the major walkway behind those seated in the stand will greatly detract from spectator enjoyment. How will you wave at your friends and admire those dressed in race gear and enjoy the speedway girls?
- Spectators at speedways are at the venue for about 5 hours and like to move about the venue. Going for a walk, to visit other vantage points, to use the toilets, to talk with friends, to purchase food and other items etc and to inspect displays are all part of the experience. Those in the grandstands generally leave their seating about three times. How will you push past seats to get in and out?
- Seating at speedway venues must be generously laid out to accommodate people leaving and returning to their seats. How many people will you have to push past or clamber over?
- Speedway spectators carry with them considerable items to support their attendance. This included extra clothing, large jackets, blankets, cushions and eskys /carry bags. Not to mention hot food and drinks taken back to the seats. When seated theses need to be

accommodated. The stowage must also avoid trip hazards for those moving to and from their seats.

- Many spectators are older and or less mobile. Negotiating stairs cramming into tight seating and walking long distances can be very challenging. I note there are no handrails in the grandstand laneways
- Whilst the lifts are good I can not comprehend how they will have adequate capacity at peak times. The exit at the end of the night seems very problematic.
- Long term Covid style social distancing needs to apply to the seating, service areas, amenities and walkways.
- The diagrams in the EIS do not seem show adequate facilities for disabled attendees and their support families / carers. Less able people must be able to be with their family, friends and carers to enjoy the speedway experience.
- The grandstand only has 9 rows of seats that is accessed from the back. The grandstand should have at least 25 rows with access from the top and bottom.
- The track should have spectator facilities on all sides to maximise attendance options.
- Sizable grassed areas are very important.

4. Wrong Location and size

The location of the new speedway at the Eastern Creek complex is totally unsound. I put forward the following reasons:-

- The site should not be considered as a segment of the drag strip complex. Dirt track speedway is a standalone activity and sport that has very few if any similarities with drag racing.

- The Speedway site is far too small. A world class dirt track speedway needs to occupy a site of about 50 ha. When the large number of on street parking spaces and public transport is taken into account the Granville site is probably over 40ha.
- There is very little information to explain the demographics of those that are likely to attend the Speedway. Surely it is absolutely critical when planning a sporting venue to have a full and detailed understanding of the people that are to use the facility and the people who will be impacted by the facility.
- There is no assessment on the number of overseas, interstate or intrastate visitors that will attend the speedway and importantly their requirements for accommodation and travel etc.
- There is very little information to explain the travel distance and routes of those that are likely to attend the Speedway. It is my understanding that about half the attendance at Valvoline Raceway come from North of the Hawkesbury River.
- There is no assessment of the number of track attendees who make overnight stays and their accommodation requirements.
- There is no public transport close to the site at race times. The nearest Rail is Blacktown about 6kms away.
- There is no overnight stay provision at the proposed venue for motorhomes / caravans. Powered sites are easy to provide and can provide another stream of income. They could also be made available at non speedway times.
- The EIS does not seem to provide for a large meeting room or rooms, for the supporters club facilities or venue hire.

5. Viability questionable

Speedway in the World started in Maitland in 1923. That's almost 100 years. In that time many speedways have been built. Most have failed due to encroachment of housing and other developments.

The viability of speedway venues is highly important and the proposed SIS should be designed and built to maximise the long term viability.

It is unreasonable for 50 days a year speedway use to justify a \$50m investment and the preparation and upkeep costs.

I consider the following to be critical:-

- The venue must be designed and built to be minimise operating costs. It is pleasing to note the inclusion of solar power, smart lighting and similar. I note the absence of wind generators and did not see reference to storage batteries.
- The ability of the venue to conduct money making activities is absolutely essential. The EIS does not consider activities like venue hire, track hire, room hire, sub events and alternate uses. This is very disappointing. As a minimum the EIS should contain a schedule of potential activities and a comment as to how the EIS will meet the identified activities.
- The venues ability to house large crowds is essential. Venue capacity like the Dragway should be approaching 50,000 people with a speedway capable of a capacity crowd of about 25000 people
- Every day should be a revenue earning day otherwise there is little opportunity to fund the essential staff necessary to clean and maintain the site, to prepare for events and to promote speedway.
- Insurance is a very important aspect that is impacted by the ability of the EIS to address health, safety, risks and unattended damage.

6. Other Issues

The following limiting factors are concerning:-

- The venue would seem to have very few opportunities to operate as multi-purpose venue. This is partly due to the Speedway being tagged on to the Drag racing complex.
- The venue would seem to have a concluding time of 10pm.
- The venue would seem to require a management plan to allow the Drag complex incorporating the speedway to operate. The EIS has no draft plan or stated activity priorities. There is no mention as to how the Motorcycle events will be accommodated. It seems to be all “ifs” and no “actions”.
- The venue would seem to be very inflexible and will not be readily adaptable to change. Eg1 if there is a new Covid how will the venue function and remain viable? Eg 2 how will the venue function with autonomous e vehicles?
- Access to the venue will in most cases require attendees to use tollways. This will force those attending to incur an extra expense of a night's entertainment / sport. The toll charge could be \$100 per night or more.
- Unlike most sports / entertainment Speedway is largely self-funded. The only reason the Government is building the SIS is because the Valvoline Raceway is being resumed for other government purposes.
- The EIS does not consider the pros and cons of other locations and or design characteristics. There is no consideration of building a major venue in locations like the Central Coast or Newcastle or East Sydney.

- The EIS is extremely verbose and totally preoccupied about the issues related to the track construction. Surely the thrust of the document should be based on the needs and requirements of a long term speedway that is efficient, safe, viable and adaptable to change. A “cut and paste” slap of paper does not serve the needs for Speedway at these difficult times.

Conclusion

The Western Sydney Parklands is 5280 ha, Surely within the parklands or at another location there is 50 ha that could be dedicated to a World class speedway complex that will serve the needs of Australia.

The new SIS vs old Valvoline Raceway is certainly not “like for like” as required by the EIS proposal and in the undertaking given by the NSW Government when announcing the resumption of the Granville site for a train shed.

The proposed venue is:-

- Smaller
- Has no history
- Is remote from public transport
- Is a very poor site layout on a very limiting site shape
- Does not cater for those less abled
- Has a pit area inadequate for most events
- Does not contain international standard features
- Is incapable of running speedway whenever the organisers choose to.
- Motorcycle racing is pencilled in to the plan however there is absolutely no detail provided to explain how and when bike will be able to function.
- The EIS proposed venue will not stimulate the sport of Speedway for spectators, competitors or for the economic benefit of NSW.

- The EIS proposed venue is a very expensive solution both in terms of capital cost and operating cost. Profitability would seem to be excluded.

Whilst I love speedway and all that goes with it I have read considered the proposal as set out in the 1000 plus page EIS for the Sydney International Speedway I sincerely believe the proposal is inadequate and that Planning Approval should not be granted. I therefore formally oppose the proposal.

There would seem to me to be three options going forward.

- A. Allow Valvoline Raceway to continue to function and to inject some funding to introduce some truly international features.
- B. Locate a 50 ha site in the Sydney Basin and build a standalone new speedway complex that meets the brief.
- C. Build two new Speedways with the funding.
 - a. A speedway in Newcastle.
 - b. Redevelop the Goulburn speedway.

Option would provide two top rating quality venues that would each be:-

- Capable of supporting 25,000 spectators in grandstands and grassed areas.
- Capable of providing 8000 car spaces within close proximity to the track.
- Pit areas would be huge and capable of accommodating large fields.
- Capable of supporting 460 metre wide clay based dirt tracks complete with all the necessary lighting, safety fencing and communications.
- Capable of viably conducting speedway and a wide range of additional activity
- Each track would have a budget of about \$20m

- Each track would incorporate modern high technology cost saving and beneficial fetures and meet high environmental standards.

Option C would provide double the Speedway activity of option A or option B. This in turn would double the economic benefit to the State of NSW and double the benefit of speedway to competitors and spectators.

Happy to answer any questions or working with the development teams to get for NSW the best speedway possible.

Rick Banyard

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Addendum

The following is a copy of questions submitted and the response received.

The inability to provide a quality response was disappointing and highlights many of the shortcomings raised in my submission.

Thank you Tara for your response.

I have prepared a sizable submission that has been awaiting your response.

I find your response disappointing as it is all in the EIS. All 1000 pages of it!

I will attach my questions and your response to my submission.

Rick

From: SydneyMetroWest

Sent: Monday, September 14, 2020 3:08 PM

To: 'Rick Banyard'

Subject: RE: Speedway question

Hi Rick,

Thank you for your interest in the Sydney International Speedway project. The project is currently in planning phase with final details of the project to be confirmed subject to planning approval and final design prior to construction. The new Sydney International Speedway was designed in consultation with industry experts and informed by a thorough analysis of speedway tracks around Australia and internationally. Track dimensions, facilities, seating and amenities are comparable with other speedways around the country including the current speedway at Parramatta.

The pit area of the new Sydney International Speedway is over 27000 square metres comprising around 150 parking bays for race vehicles and their tenders, including 20 bays for heavy vehicles transporting racing vehicles. It also comprises provision for up to 20 enclosed pit garages and a competitor amenities block. The number of staff and their functions will be determined by the future speedway operator.

The new Sydney International Speedway comprises about 3750 grandstand seats and additional terraced seating for up to a total of around 7000 spectators. The current design would allow for temporary seating to add capacity if required. The capacity has been designed to match the grandstand capacity of the current speedway venue.

The project team will work to finalise a number of design elements including final configuration of grandstands over the coming months during the final design stages for the project prior to construction starting.

We do not have the visitor patronage data to advise how many people will travel from North of the Hawkesbury River to use the new Speedway. However, access to the motor sport precinct is quite direct using the F3 via NorthConnex to M2 / M7 then exit onto the Great Western Highway.

Tracks other than the new Sydney International Speedway are outside of the current project scope and Sydney Metro has no current plans to build another speedway within Greater Sydney region.

Submissions on the Environmental Impact Statement for Sydney International Speedway close this Wednesday 16 September and you may wish to make a submission directly to the [Department of Planning, Industry and Environment](#).

If there is anything further we can help with, feel free to give us a call via our community hotline: 1800 612 173

Kind regards

Tara

Community Place Manager

Tara Larkin

Community Place Manager
Sydney Metro West

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From: Rick Banyard [mailto:rick.banyard@bigpond.com]

Sent: Wednesday, 9 September 2020 9:33 AM

To: SydneyMetroWest <SydneyMetroWest@transport.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Speedway question

Hi,

I would be pleased if you could answer the following 4 questions?

1. The new speedway says the crowd will be 7000 people.

Is that the total number at the venue?

How many in :-

- corporate boxes
 - pit area
 - seated stands 3750
 - grassed seating areas etc
 - working on the site
 - track officials and associated people
- Total at the venue

2. If the pit area has 120 competitors

- how many drivers
- how many crew
- how many very large transporters
- how many mid size transporters

- how many cars

3. what percentage of visitors to the track will come from North of the Hawkesbury River?

4. Will there be any other tracks in the Greater Sydney region?

I thank you in anticipation for the response

Rick Banyard

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