The Hon Paul Fletcher MP

Minister for Families and Social Services

The Hon Alan Tudge MP

Minister for Cities, Urban Infrastructure and Population

PARLIAMENT HOUSE

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ministers

I write to offer congratulations on your Ministerial appointments and to thank Minister Fletcher for his courteous response to my letter of May 2018 re rail aspects of the Western Sydney ‘City Deal’.

Unfortunately, the response confirms my comments about the Scoping Study and subsequent decisions by referring to:

1. A ‘double-deck suburban railway’ operated by Sydney Trains; and
2. Capacity constraints in central Sydney restricting services in Western Sydney.

Regarding (a), the point of my earlier letter was to demonstrate the irrationality of the Scoping Study by e.g. reference to its view that single and double-deck trains cannot use the same tracks.

The response confirms there is such a view. However, there is no such thing as a double-deck railway - it is another example of make-believe terminology referred to in my earlier letter.

To reiterate, single-deck trains have, can and do operate on Sydney Trains’ network. The single-deck train from Canberra using 55km of the same tracks as double-deck suburban trains is an example.

No doubt the response repeats what Minister Fletcher was advised. Such advice is so incomprehensibly incompetent as to suggest it is a cover-up for something else.

Regarding (b), I contend the Scoping Study was designed to avoid mentioning the central Sydney capacity issue. This is behind the attempt to limit it to parts of Western Sydney. The central Sydney issue is relevant to Western Sydney because railways are networks without artificial boundaries.

The lack of infrastructure in the CBD, across the harbour, and between Parramatta and Epping is the constraint and determining matter for Western Sydney rail. The reason for this lack of infrastructure is Metro. Its tunnels are too small to take normal sized trains. It may have taken the only suitable alignment for normal trains through the CBD and across the harbour. Its conversion of the Epping-Chatswood line precludes another crossing at Parramatta.

The strange characteristics of Metro is the reason for capacity constraints in Western Sydney including to the new airport. These characteristics may not be necessary – Metro may embody a hidden agenda part of which is to sabotage Sydney Trains and Western Sydney airport. Even if there is no such intention it is having that effect.

You might recall the NSW Government’s hasty, unexplained decision to reverse its policy for making the North West Rail Link part of Sydney Trains - instead starting Metro. You may be unaware of Metro’s oddities, the condemnation of a North West Metro by a renowned international expert and that it flies in the face of advice from Infrastructure NSW and their international experts. That decision announced in mid-2012, together with introduction of unpublicised peculiarities, was when the NSW Government opposed a second Sydney airport.

Subsequent reversal of NSW opposition to an airport was not accompanied by reconsideration of Metro or its routes. This is despite the fact that Metro and its unusual characteristics on those routes is at least inconsistent with – and damages (as your response suggests) – the ability of land transport to serve Western Sydney Airport, and all of Western Sydney for that matter.

That the Scoping Study Report does not mention this – and avoids recognising options such as St Marys-Blacktown-Parramatta-Liverpool-Airport – raises further grave doubts about its integrity.

These doubts are amplified by the absence of data needed to support assertions regarding – which go to the identification of the ‘preferred network’ and train types. I note some previous rail studies published by the Commonwealth Department included extraordinary claims regarding demand – such as more people likely to take high speed rail trips from Bowral than from both Newcastle and the Central Coast combined.

The Scoping Study is part of a pattern of bizarre advice and circumstances surrounding NSW rail policy in recent years and Metro since 2007. It is unfortunate Commonwealth agencies have become involved.

Reflecting the above, the matters raised in a positive fashion in the response – a ‘preferred long-term rail network’, and the City Deal $50m for a study into a north-south link – are the product of a Report that should be considered, and may eventually be proven, to be based on deception.

As ever, I would be happy to explain this in detail.

You should:

1. commence an investigation into what lies behind the advice given to your Government about this matter;
2. withdraw Commonwealth support for Metro and Western Sydney rail until an independent public inquiry has examined and reported on Sydney rail matters.

Since last writing to Minister Fletcher, I have considered the public record in more depth, and drawn matters to the attention of relevant people including the former Prime Minister [attached].

Finally, notwithstanding the above, I wish you well in your new portfolios.

Yours sincerely

John Austen

28 August 2018

## Attachment

The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP

Prime Minister

PARLIAMENT HOUSE

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Turnbull,

You may recall I wrote to you and others in May 2018 concerning rail aspects of the Western Sydney ‘city deal’.

In the absence of responses, I decided to further look into the matter and some aspects of Sydney Metro.

A copy of summary results is attached. I intend to publish supporting details soon.

In brief, the public evidence I found would support suspicions of an agenda to distract from and / or hide the reasons for and consequences of the NSW Government’s ‘Metro’.

Much information provided to the public is false and misleading. The key criteria supposedly used is biased towards but does not justify Metro. Sydney is not gaining so much a rapid transit or metro system, but a commuter railway in parallel, inferior and damaging to Sydney Trains.

Metro may have some roots in former Labor administrations as a way of sidestepping Sydney Trains.

While ‘insiders’ may find a clandestine pursuit of an anti-Sydney Trains agenda amusing, the manifest negligence of the approach and defiance of expert advice is severely damaging to Sydney and especially Western Sydney. This appears to be a case of a political / bureaucratic ‘need’ to keep secrets leading to incompetence or worse.

The failure of Commonwealth and State agencies, including so called ‘independent’ ones to even raise issues in their ‘reviews’, is perhaps even more remarkable.

In such circumstances I recommend:

1. An immediate stop to all Metro work – including construction and planning;
2. A proper public inquiry such as a Royal Commission into this and associated matters;
3. Investigation of the performance of relevant State and Commonwealth advisers.

I would be happy to explain this and the attached in detail.

I am writing in similar terms to the Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and to the Leader of the Opposition in NSW.

J Austen

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 August 2018

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## ATTACHMENT

# Dogs Breakfast summary

A new jade beagle article on Metro - *Dogs Breakfast for All* - arose from two comments by the NSW Government:

* The Premier claiming Paris and London technology could increase the capacity of Sydney Trains’ system, with the ABC and others inferring this capacity could exceed that of Metro;
* The Minister for Transport giving the Western line being ‘overwhelmed’ as reason for rejecting $3bn funding offer for Western Sydney rail.

Following these the jade beagle asked for a review of public statements about NSW rail policy. The review raised serious issues.

1. Metro is enormously consequential and threatens to divide Sydney. Yet there is no public evidence decision makers or advisers – save for a few experts who are ignored:

* Understand this; or
* Considered issues with appropriate seriousness.

2. Publicly available information raises suspicions. The criteria on which Metro decisions were supposedly based e.g. passenger capacity per line:

* Are contradicted by policy statements, notably *Sydney’s Rail Future*;
* Are flawed at least for any use outside central city areas;
* Do not support any decision to introduce Metro - non-Metro options meet the criteria better.

3. The public presentation of the criteria and decisions is false and misleading e.g.:

* The capacity comparison between Sydney Trains and Metro is misleading and uses false data;
* The quoted level of Metro services and turn-up-and-go claims are misleading;
* There has been no presentation or explanation of the key issue of Metro tunnel size.

4. Public views of experts, including those engaged by NSW, have been ignored:

* In one case it is not clear the views were given to decision makers;
* In another (earlier) case there were attempts to suppress these views.

5. Experts, and others, have:

* Queried the locations of Metro and suggested other options which were ignored;
* (Therefore) implicitly seen their role as finding a suitable place to put a Metro project.

6. The Labor-era Metro appears to be continuing via e.g.:

* The present project being ‘uncannily’ similar to the North West Metro proposed by Labor;
* Failure to acknowledge alternatives, options or opinions;
* Refusal to modify the ‘plan’ in the face of fundamental changes in circumstances;
* Adherence to the ‘plan’ even when evidence of it causing severe damage came to light.

7. Inferences include:

* Decisions to ‘go Metro’ were de facto made well before official announcements;
* The reasons for those decisions are not (limited to) those given to the public;
* Nor are the reasons (limited to) speculated matters such as industrial relations or franchising;
* The reasons given to the public distract from other reasons.

8. This is consistent with a group of people wanting to ‘play trains’ and using the North West Rail line – an election promise - as an opportunity to start the game e.g.:

* The history and (implicit) search by experts for a place for a Metro project;
* The project not having a rapid transit but an underlying commuter railway function;
* It not being comparable to iconic European Metros;
* Small tunnel size (and possibly CBD route) prevent it being part of a larger train set;
* Criteria being focussed on trains rather than demand or passenger measures.

10. Sydney is not getting a Paris-style metro.

* It is getting the worst aspect of Paris – small tunnels decided on in the late 1800s to prevent another railway;
* While the better Parisian analogy is RER, Sydney may forever be unable to get a proper such system because of small tunnels - a matter faced up to in Paris in the 1960s.

11. Since 2012, shortly after the announcement of the ‘go-Metro’ decision, advisers – Infrastructure NSW, Infrastructure Australia and Commonwealth and State Departments - have:

* Failed to analyse Metro or acknowledge key issues;
* Relied on the Metro proponent for almost all information;
* Overlooked inconsistencies and contradictions in information and policy;
* Not apparently considered critical information or proper options;
* Published grossly deficient advice;
* Distracted from reasons for and consequences of Metro;
* Done so in spite of being on notice of a probability of being misled by the proponent.

12. Points 5 and 11 above are:

* Not consistent with independence of agencies;
* Are consistent with the agencies being subjected to influence by the NSW Government.

13. Only a proper public inquiry, empowered to call and examine witnesses under oath and require production of documentation can elicit the truth.