**John Austen – Sods at Badgerys Creek – Pearls and Irritations**

*Instead of turning sods at Badgerys Creek airport, the new Prime Minister should order the public inquiry into Sydney Metro recommended by John Menadue.*

The newly helmeted Prime Minister recently appeared in the media turning first sods at the site of Sydney’s second airport - [Badgerys Creek](#_top).

While that seems good news, the ability of the public to get to the airport remains in the air.

The nub of the issue is the NSW Government’s Metro rail mania. This led to a ‘plan’ for an isolated railway to the airport costed at $20bn and taking many years to build, instead of the straightforward pre-planned extension of existing lines – identified in the airport environmental impact statement – which would cost a fraction of the sum and be ready much [earlier.](#_top)

The reason given by officials and Ministers for disconnection of Badgerys Creek rail from the rest of Sydney: single-deck trains cannot run on the same tracks as Sydney Trains’ double-deck fleet. Apart from being idiotic it is proved wrong several times a day - by single-deck Canberra trains passing near Badgerys Creek on Sydney Trains’ tracks.

The disconnection will see people in Western Sydney drive to the airport because of the inconvenience and time wasted in changing trains. People in my area face catching at least 4 different trains to get to the new airport around 25km away – starting at Campbelltown, changing at Glenfield, Parramatta and St Marys. In comparison they can catch a direct train to Kingsford Smith airport 45km away.

People in other areas of Sydney will fare worse!

Few in Western Sydney believe the full $20bn Badgerys Creek rail plan will eventuate. It would be a gross waste of huge sums of money with little benefit. Given the implausibility and probable dishonesty of the stated reasons it reeks of cynical politics - to put some content to the ‘Western Sydney city deal’ – a promise to be dropped as soon as possible.

That the ‘plan’ is a result of a long-delayed Commonwealth-State ‘study’ is reason enough for a proper public investigation into what went on behind Government closed doors – as John Menadue [recommended](#_top).

Moreover, it is likely the idea of disconnecting Badgerys Creek was hatched to cover-up dreadful implications of Metro. One such effect is to hamstring Sydney Trains’ capacity in central Sydney and (therefore) effectively prevent rail system expansion elsewhere in the metropolitan area – such as to Badgerys Creek.

Readers might also recall Metro was: cooked-up when Ms Berejiklian reportedly opposed a second airport in Sydney; in conflict with public advice from experts.

Rather than back-slapping activities like turning sods at Badgerys Creek, the Prime Minister should concern himself with the poor sods who will suffer from NSW Government Metro madness.

He should set up the Commission of Inquiry into Sydney rail. If not, like the State Government, he might need hard hat and safety glasses for more than photo-ops -when Western Sydney responds to the ‘rail plan’ with a well-deserved ‘sod off’!

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