# Believe it or Not

Life betters art which imitates life. So too for articles.

This is an article for the odditorium. Required by the beagle after an attempted usurpation of its role as purveyor of the infrastructure freak show.

This article, to imitate the life of its subject matter, is a mess. No doubt a bigger mess is on the way.

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## 1. Introduction 1

Before we start a little arithmetic. Largely based on data in a technical report commissioned for Infrastructure Australia’s recent audit. Which used information from Infrastructure Australia.[[1]](#endnote-1)

**Table 1: Sydney Metro v. Sydney Trains crowding discomfort comparison**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Sydney Metro** | **Sydney Trains** | **Difference** |
| Passenger capacity per train | 1153 | 1430 | -277 |
| Passengers at train capacity  Seated  Standing | 378  775 | 900  530 | -522  245 |
| Passenger discomfort at capacity per train\*  Seated  Standing  Total | 1134  7750  8884 | 2700  5300  8000 | -1156  2450  884 |
| Line capacity trains \*\* | 30 | 24 | 6 |
| Passenger capacity per line  Seated  Standing  Total | 11340  23250  34590 | 21600  12720  34320 | -10260  10530  270 |
| Passenger discomfort at line capacity \*  Seated  Standing  Total | 34020  232500  266520 | 64800  127200  192000 | -30780  105300  74520 (39%) |

\* Disbenefit minutes per 10 minutes of crowded travel. 3 minutes for seated passengers, 10 minutes for standing passengers.

\*\* Per hour. From <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/dogs-breakfast-for-all.html>

Not finished yet! The Table has Metro’s ostensible line capacity at 270 passengers per hour more than Sydney Trains. Adjusting for this, the result is discomfort from crowding on Metro is worse by 71,820 minutes for the relevant period. Using the cited value of travel time figure of $16.57 per hour, this yields a disbenefit – compared with Sydney Trains – of $19,834 for this time.

Still not finished. That value of travel time figure looks biased. The one used for business travel on roads is $53.78. As public transport peaks coincide with and are caused by business peak travel, the roads value should be used. This yields a disbenefit of Metro – compared with Sydney Trains of $64,375 – for 10-minute journeys on crowded trains during one hour.

If you don’t believe line capacity of Sydney Trains is 24 per hour, and prefer say 20, the difference is $41,787 relative disbenefit, albeit with spare Metro capacity for 5990 standing passengers. Believe it or not. Check yourself. While checking consider standing times of say 20 minutes, two peaks a day and 268 peaks days per year and present values discounted at say 7%. Now consider the possible capacity of Sydney Trains using ‘Paris and London’ technology. Did you get Metro is worse by $1505m – too high as crowding does not occur on day 1 - and has a capacity disbenefit of 8,300 passengers per line per hour (15,660 seats)?

Don’t bother looking for such calculations in the by-now-legendary Infrastructure Australia 2017 assessment of Sydney Metro. The one which recommended the project without mentioning its key attributes, without knowing its costs and apparently ignoring the above.[[2]](#endnote-2)

## 2. Introduction 2

Four months post NSW and Federal elections the public is revelling in the glory of its handiwork in re-electing thoroughly incompetent – if not ill-intentioned – Governments.

Only the media, some parts, spoiling the fun by pointing to incongruities. And boof-headedness. As if pulling wings off blow-flies.

A tip: it’s more fun to pull the wings off only one side.

For those in need of exhibits: go to BigTown. Take the 374-bus past once was Deathtrap, maybe one day Ozy Oval. If the State Government can find a builder game enough to deal with it.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Think that Government was lying about one contract for stadium demolition and rebuild, now supposedly revealed to be a single contract in two separate halves i.e. two contracts? Soap to wash your mouth out please. You haven’t seen the contract. Few have. Parliament hasn’t.

It would be fascinating to see what the High Court makes of an Executive Government precluding Parliamentary oversight by ‘commercial in confidence’ clauses.[[4]](#endnote-4)

At least the former builder, actually demolisher, can’t sue the Government for being ‘booted-out’.

So says a Government Minister. And Ministers would know - as demonstrated by the Acciona case.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Labor? Keeping true to its pre-election form of missing penalties in front. Not even prosecuting that most prosecutable of idiocies – Ms Berejiklian’s promising people can ‘have it all’\*. It is mute.

Apart from an immortal line – how about a smaller stadium?[[6]](#endnote-6)

Labor’s continued policy absence poses THE question: is Mark Latham the real leader of the Opposition in NSW? He is the only one who nailed the Government’s lies about Western Sydney.[[7]](#endnote-7)

The attentive will have noted the beagle emended the Premier’s pledge with an ‘\*’.

The beagle *can reveal* – to filch a phrase from la passport (Daily Telegraph) and TV Pravda (ABC 2) – ‘\*’ denotes some exceptions to having it all.

Stuff NSW cannot have. Like a useful Parramatta light rail. No great loss there. It should be a heavy rail system as per the Rt. Hon. EG Whitlam all those years ago.[[8]](#endnote-8)

Speaking of which: have you taken a walk along George St? Watch your step. Take a First-Aid kit.[[9]](#endnote-9)

## 3. Quality

### 3.1 Daley

Perhaps you prefer the charms of Chatswood Station. Or have an affinity for sitting in tunnels?

If so, *the* worker is your friend. The worker who – in setting off a fire alarm – disabled the entire Metro line, leaving passengers stranded in trains in tunnels. Is he related to Joe the camera man?[[10]](#endnote-10)

According to our favourite Government spokesman – the Minister for Transport – this shows the system works. That’s a relief. Since it apparently works quite a lot.[[11]](#endnote-11)

Working so much that despite the Arthur Daley like claims of ‘quality’ by Ministers, the public might be somewhat underwhelmed by what $8bn has delivered in the name of Metro.

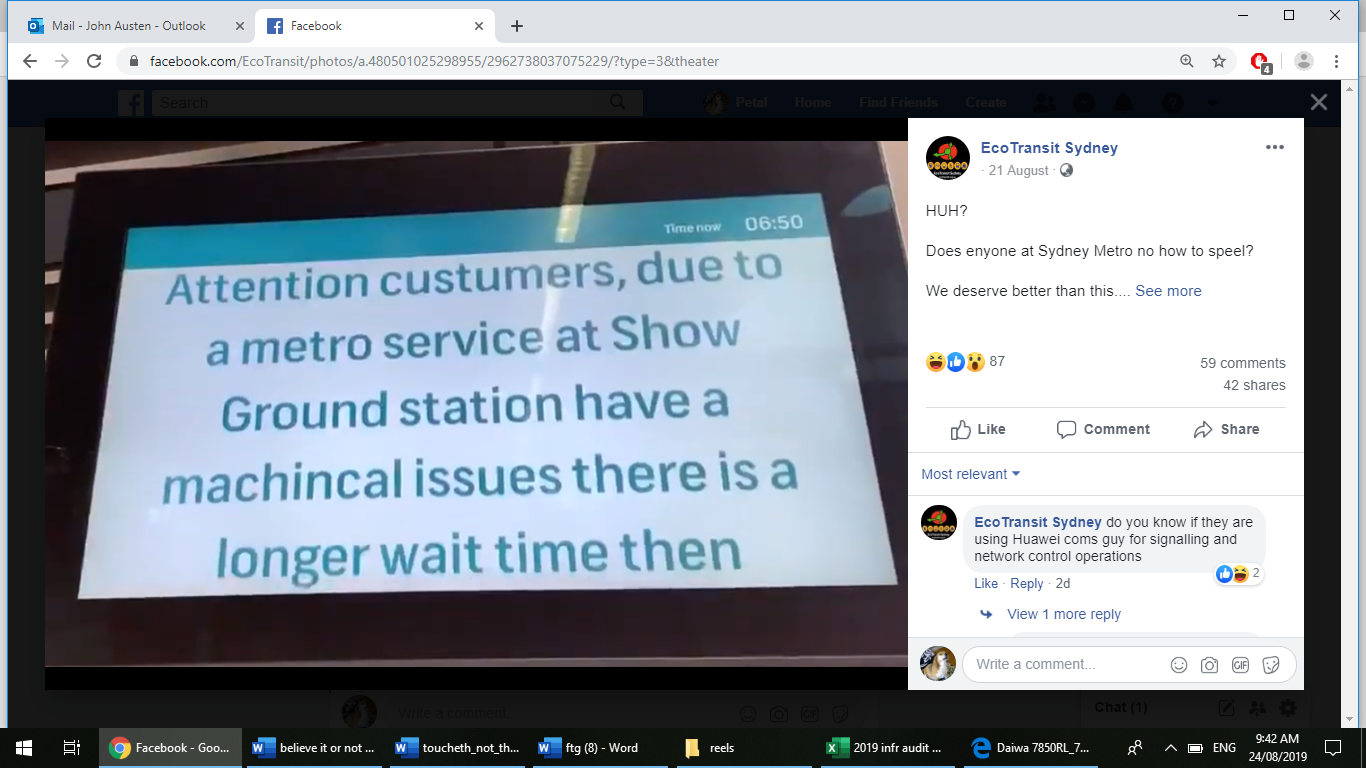
What all can see is the world-is-your-lobster-class laughing stock of upside-down back-to front NSW public transport.[[12]](#endnote-12)

Their view of Big Town topsy-turvey transport enabled, even facilitated, by comparison between Metro and Sydney Trains inevitably made at Chatswood each trip. Albeit gunzels would be disappointed by the strange oversight of Metro not reversing the ‘up’ and ‘down’ tracks to showcase its genius break of gauge.

To be fair - to Arthur Daley - most of the ‘everyone will want one’ squawking previously led by the Premier has stopped. Or been drowned out by travellers and even a shock-jock.[[13]](#endnote-13)

### 3.2 Mother and child reunion

Yet NSW Ministers-in-hiding have spent their time and your money judiciously. As the following download from Facebook suggests.



That is one way to keep the plebs amused during the all-too-frequent incidents.

The most noteworthy of which was enforced separation of mother from child – apparently the younger generation being more enamoured of the ‘new technology’ than the more seasoned traveller. Infant on Metro, mother nearly. But not quite. Platform and train doors close. By miracle of driverless technology, the train leaves. Baby on board, mother not.

But on that strange and potentially mournful day mother and child later reunited. A happy ending. And to those blaming mother for lack of metroquitte: she reportedly was a Metro employee. Believe it or not.[[14]](#endnote-14)

### 3.3 Customer service sign

Sadly, the tale was unreported in the above vernacular. No matter, the beagle is here to help:

Smale crabon based live foam dissaxiated vom momy re world class high capacity driverless turn-up-and-go Metro. Wicked Sydney Trains, unions and people to blaim. World class high capacity driverless turn-up-and-go train of the future Metro undamaged. Gladys glad. Look over there! Catch nix twayne pliss.

Metro does seem a little fragile at present. Because of its length without junctions? Whatever.

‘Turn-up and go’ has morphed into ‘*turn-up and wait*’ off-peak with low and variant frequencies. ‘*Turn-up and stop*’ and ‘*Turn-up and get onto the provided substitute bus’* happens too. Which wasn’t supposed to in this wonderful world of unmanned trains. Even if the trains seem to have as at least as many staff as Sydney Trains. Buses have more. Wonderful staff who deserve better.[[15]](#endnote-15)

The statisticians tip: watch the doors! Those in-the-know know what this means. Or they should.[[16]](#endnote-16)

### 3.4 Extra pleasure

Remember those cigarette ads extolling extra length smokes?[[17]](#endnote-17)

Thankfully Metro is being greatly lengthened. To Bankstown. Where platform extenders will be used. Adding to, actually multiplying, an apparently already significant probability of failure of the entire system. That’s extra pleasure to look forward to. Especially as it will affect trains in the CBD. In order for more to experience the pleasure than the so-far disappointing Metro patronage.[[18]](#endnote-18)

Disappointing, that is, to those for whom patronage means people on trains.[[19]](#endnote-19)

Still its early in the Metro day, as the air-conditioning reminds us.

### 3.5 When only the best will do

Given this is about quality, one could also mention WestConnex or part thereof which now has its own crash alley, and preferred locations for truck drivers to reverse their rigs against heavy traffic. A big shout-out too for our friends in the now more air polluted inner-west. We don’t have to use the rat run from Summer Hill to Cleveland St anymore.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Meanwhile, public servants from all walks of life salivate as they wait for Otupia or something on quality TV Pravda. What a subversive show that is – taking the mickey out of the mouse of a policy Federal Labor produced before the election. With inflatable bike paths.

But no marks from the beagle until they have an *Attack of the Mole People* episode. In which the culprits make tunnels with diameters too small for proper size vehicles. That would be art. And worthy of imitation by life. Turning to art have you seen the audit?

## 4. The Sloane Ranger

### 4.1 Infrastructure Australia replays Hanrahan

Subtitled ‘we’ll all be rooned’, Infrastructure Australia’s Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019 provided ample fodder. Not food. For the parrots of the press, and copycats of TV and radio.[[21]](#endnote-21)

Sydney and Melbourne ‘paralysed’. Gridlock worsened. Congestion to double! (Perhaps like freight – eeeventuallee). Unless infrastructure spending boom continues.

Duly ‘reported’ the day of publication. As if journalists had read – and understood - each of the 642 pages. Plus, the several hundred-page backgrounds which entailed all manner of data. Like that used in the earlier table.

No matter, the club line was followed. All happy.

Until the Ranger rode into journo town. On a hoss called Australian.

### 4.2 Big iron

The Ranger. Not so named due to frequenting an unremarkable place formerly guesting the scion of aristocracy in old London. Rather the beagle has added an ‘e’ to protect the innocent.[[22]](#endnote-22)

A Ranger, because she totes an economic big iron. There should be a soundtrack:[[23]](#endnote-23)

*Hey Sloane, I heard you shot that punk down.* etc*[[24]](#endnote-24)*

### 4.3 punk

Remember Bobby DeNiro’s gratis character assessment of President Trump? Bit of a yawn and irrelevant in the Antipodes. But for one comment.[[25]](#endnote-25)

He called Trump a punk. Not a salute to the WWE superstar with straight-edge lifestyle.[[26]](#endnote-26)

The 642+n pages produced by Infrastructure Australia? Beagle view: a punk of a report. The beagle couldn’t be bothered giving a detailed critique. So, here is a summary in a recent post:

### 4.4 Repeat

*‘Last week saw media coverage of Infrastructure Australia’s 2019 infrastructure audit. The hype was short lived. The audit was another analytically deficient step towards a transport policy abyss into which the infrastructure club wants to throw vast amounts of your money.’*

Blah blah blah.

Those interested can look at the notes.

After taking in a few more lines:

‘The 2019 infrastructure audit: Believe it or not?

For me: Not. Bring on public inquiries!’ [[27]](#endnote-27)

## 5. Last chance saloon

### 5.1 Lights, camera, inaction

Back to the Ranger with the economic big iron. Whose bullet fairly ripped before the reader could clear the punk’s cover.[[28]](#endnote-28)

Whose swiftness is still talked about to this day. Who left the audit writhing in the dust. As if winged by Angel Eyes. Would the Rider finish it off? Nope, the pricing bullet didn’t get into the chamber of the Ranger’s iron.[[29]](#endnote-29)

Then Grattan walked from the last chance policy saloon and put the slipper in. In the Grattan way.[[30]](#endnote-30)

Like black hats in a spaghetti western - not quite connecting. Making things only die a bit.

Like the Duck of Death. Waiting for the report to blow-up in its authors’ hands – a failing common to the new Infrastructure Australia model.[[31]](#endnote-31)

Before pop!

A pop that never happened.[[32]](#endnote-32)

Misery extended. For the punk. And Pravda watchers. The punk – Ranger’s bullet within - crawling through the dirt, trying to get back to the saloon. And as TV does, Pravda tried first aid.

A replay with interview. A plea on the punk’s behalf lest Big Town, the second city of the second State and even Vegas be paralysed. No talk of the Ranger. Content: congestion and commuting getting worse because urban sprawl is finished. Best non-sequitur of the year. So far.[[33]](#endnote-33)

Did bystanders care? Nup. Not even Pravda viewers who joined the anti-people whingers.

They think the population is too big? And THE CAUSE of this and all other ills. Do something: leave.

### 5.2 Making the beagle’s day

The punk’s irredeemable nature, insolent tone and sly reach for the begging bowl was making the beagle’s day.

Yet in all the excitement we lost count of the infrastructure problems. Did we beg for 5 sectors or was it only 4? The beagle was ready to suggest this tome ask itself one question:

*do you feel lucky?*

*Well do you? punk?[[34]](#endnote-34)*

### 5.3 Saved by Bell

The beagle couldn’t make that call.

The punk was saved by the absence of Bell.[[35]](#endnote-35)

All – the beagle too - overlooked the one critical infrastructure deficiency shown by the audit.

Telecommunications.

The extent of mistakes says: ‘less than optimal consultation’. That the authors’ phones were out.

Believe it or not.

## 6. Distemper

### 6.1 A misc. moan

A beagle with distemper is in trouble. A beagle with bad temper is trouble. Trouble a plenty – beyond the audit - has tested the beagle’s temper.

Given the stridency of pleas, perhaps NSW – and one or two other governments - is running out of ‘infrastructure money’. Maybe the apartment building crisis has something to do with this. But if the Commonwealth stumps up some cash, and with a few more privatisations, possibly the West Metro will be a go-go. Then, pilgrims, youse are on your owns – and don’t forget to pay the bill.[[36]](#endnote-36)

In Toy-Town, Canberra, Casino type revelations from the cash starved ABC are arcing-up some non-Government members to ask for a Commonwealth integrity commission. The anti-corruption calls might get somewhere if Labor can shake off the me-too lethargy that infected its campaign for office infrastructure style. Somnia that looks to have spread among the body of the comrades. Perhaps the NSW ICAC inquiry will wake a few up?[[37]](#endnote-37)

Meanwhile the windmill tilting re Adani continues. Some apparently feel they are taking on the fifth horseman of the apocalypse. Just like the anti-populationists – who say the continent of Australia is overcrowded at a population almost that of Tokyo half a century ago – the nobility points at 12 or so mtpa out of Queensland and overlooks an increase of 170mt in China.[[38]](#endnote-38)

What happened to the expression: ‘get a grip’? The same as what became of the fact of 8000mtpa world coal production? Forgotten. Rightly so when we can wring hands, ‘go on strike’ and cause blackouts over adding to the 40mtpa of Australian domestic coal consumption.[[39]](#endnote-39)

Closer to the kennel, Big Town, is regurgitated talk – analytic vomit – about the Sydney Trains network being tangled. The cause this time? God? No: a hatch on a train threatening to bring down the wires at Town Hall one morning. Do you recall the previous hatch incident that led to a deluge of opprobrium on the maintenance staff? No? Look here.[[40]](#endnote-40)

Mr Tubman, with commendable restraint, did not point to the real culprit in this case. That would have sounded like a cheap shot – ‘I told you so’. The beagle is not so considerate.[[41]](#endnote-41)

### 6.2 Pop

Recall how old Corky got it in the liver from the Duck of Death.[[42]](#endnote-42)

Yet the Ranger had only winged the punk before the Grattan kicking.

Time for the beagle to finish the job:

#### Not understanding Australia is a Federation

Infrastructure Australia is a Commonwealth adviser.

The audit did not distinguish between Commonwealth and State responsibilities.

In failing to do so it contributes to chronic governance problems.

Those problems are root causes of infrastructure deficiencies and diminution of democracy.

#### Not dealing with interoperability

National interoperability is a principal concern of Federal governments.

Interoperability is one of the two mechanisms for infrastructure to deal with uncertainty.

The audit did not identify interoperability among infrastructure criteria.

In this failure it contributes to inefficiencies and inequities, and to stranded assets.

#### Failure to consider pricing

As financial costs are faced by infrastructure users, pricing and infrastructure are linked.

Pricing is one of the two mechanisms for infrastructure to deal with uncertainty.

The audit did not consider efficient pricing of transport infrastructure.

In this failure it grossly overstated road infrastructure needs and contributes to the wrong projects at the wrong places at the wrong time for the wrong reasons.

#### Trivia

The audit appeared to aim at presenting some amusing oddities.

Those oddities did not include issues that are serious by nature of their strangeness.

The effect is to trivialise those issues, and ignore very substantial problems.

Two such problems are small Sydney Metro tunnels and the export-reimport of gas.[[43]](#endnote-43)

Unlike Little Bill it deserves it. Pop.[[44]](#endnote-44)

### 6.3 Oh no!

Yet we conclude on a high note. In the Legislative Council, seat of the real Opposition leader of NSW – Mark Latham. Believe it or not, one of its Committees is to inquire into the extension of Metro to Bankstown. Terms of reference include the *‘adequacy of the business case’*. That would be the business case considered in the by-now-legendary Infrastructure Australia assessment?[[45]](#endnote-45)

Let’s hope the inquiry doesn’t accept the excuses for misinformation and non-disclosure pro-offered to the Committee inquiry into WestConnex. And that it calls relevant witnesses.[[46]](#endnote-46)

J Austen

29 August 2019

1. <https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-08/Transport%20Modelling%20Report%20for%20Sydney.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/earth-to-canberra-2.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/doublet-of-ramses.html>

   <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-27/sydney-stadium-former-builder-cant-sue-government-minister-says/11353114> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/commercial-in-confidence.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-27/sydney-stadium-former-builder-cant-sue-government-minister-says/11353114> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/with-stadium-plan-in-flux-labor-proposes-a-smaller-moore-park-venue-20190805-p52e2l.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/australia/why-sydney-is-a-disaster-mark-latham-on-everything-thats-wrong-with-australias-biggest-city-and-its-troubled-future-thanks-to-a-booming-population/ar-AAEnppj> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/toucheth-not-the-monorail-western-sydney-rail.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/day-time-tram-testing-in-sydney-s-cbd-poses-new-risk-for-pedestrians-20190702-p5239y.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/sport/cricket/joe-the-cameraman-takes-a-spill-at-the-mcg/news-story/b710be53ed0a632b8e8a2bf1e811b3a9> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/technician-s-control-room-error-causes-metro-trains-to-shut-down-20190729-p52bsz.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExAjQUXuVCI> [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. <https://www.2gb.com/get-on-the-damn-train-yourself-ray-hadleys-message-to-the-minister-after-listener-reveals-metro-fail/> [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. <https://7news.com.au/news/disaster-and-emergency/sydney-metro-train-takes-off-with-toddler-in-pram-leaving-distraught-mother-on-platform-c-414910> [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/dogs-breakfast-for-all.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. In case they don’t, the likely issue is the failure rate per door cycle (open-close). This is a notorious cause of incident delays on Sydney trains, associated with an inability for the train to move when doors are opened, or jammed. Metro has more doors on each train, and doors on platforms. These need to synchronise both in time and location; implying the probability of failure is higher e.g. <https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/australia/sydneys-dollar73billion-disaster-long-awaited-driverless-metro-train-is-plagued-by-issues-just-hours-after-opening/ar-AABVNgb>. Adding platform extenders, which need to synchronise with the doors, will increase the probability. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/dogs-breakfast-for-all.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. The beagle can’t find it at present but here is another to enjoy – of people ‘having it all’.

    <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIp1FE41tpE> [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. The pleasure <https://www.retrojunk.com/content/child/quote/page/836/austin-powers-the-spy-who-shagged-me> [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Patronage on stations on the line reportedly increased by 147,000 or 6.2% over the year to June 2019. This may be an underestimate as there may be an error in the reported figures for Macquarie University – if there is, the increase was 221,000 or 9.4%. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/commuters-pour-onto-sydney-s-new-driverless-trains-figures-show-20190809-p52fmx.html> The reason this is disappointing is there should be some increase in travellers between existing stations on the line and the new Metro stations, and also on the line attracted from the Richmond line. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. M4 crash alley <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/30m-upgrade-to-m4-s-crash-alley-exit-fast-tracked-after-fatality-20190612-p51wxv.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. <http://www.catholica.com.au/brianstake/010_bt_print.php> [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Sloane ranger <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/money-and-power/a10356763/sloane-ranger-handbook-princess-diana/>. *Cooler, Faster, More Expensive: The Return of the Sloane Ranger*

    <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/oct/30/digestedread.johncrace> [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/author/Judith+Sloan>

    The shot: <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/inquirer/another-day-another-600-pages-of-audit-stuff-and-nonsense/news-story/d73c4bc37166c5de3a2f8a195ab66311> [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. *Hey Sloane, I heard you shot that punk audit down  
    You shot it down in the ground, yeah  
    Yes, I did, I shot it  
    You know I caught the audit messin' Big Town  
    Yes I did, I shot it  
    You know I caught the punk messin' Big Town  
    And I gave it the gun  
    And shot it.*

    From Hey Joe <https://www.google.com/search?q=hey+joe+lyrics&rlz=1C1CHBF_enAU754AU754&oq=hey+joe&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0l5.3723j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8> [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. <https://www.cheatsheet.com/entertainment/every-one-of-robert-de-niros-most-ruthless-trump-tirades.html/> [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. CM Punk <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CM_Punk>. He also is a comic book writer, believe it or not!

    ‘Don’t let these tattoos fool you. I’m straight edge. I’m a man of great discipline; I don’t drink, I don’t smoke, I don’t do drugs… my addiction is wrestling – my obsession is competition. Discipline. My name is C…M…Punk.”

    <https://www.sportskeeda.com/wwe/wwe-top-10-quotes-of-cm-punk> [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. *‘The ‘new’ corporate Infrastructure Australia designed by the Abbott Government conducts an ‘audit’ of energy, water, telecommunications and transport infrastructure every few years. The audits report infrastructure performance e.g. delays on major roads. However, unlike other audits – say of businesses - projections of future performance are also presented.*

    *The second such* [*audit*](#_top) *was published on 13 August. Its projections were seized on with media claims that* [*$200bn infrastructure spending*](#_top) *is needed in the next five years lest Sydney and Melbourne become ‘paralysed’.*

    *The hysteria was spurred by a hastily written* [*press release*](#_top) *and sound bites of impending peril. Yet neither the release – nor the audit – mentioned a $200bn ‘need’. The confusion didn’t stop there – the ‘needed’ amount might or might not refer to all infrastructure sectors (not just transport), schools, hospitals etc. and operating costs – all topics of this audit!*

    *One* [*commentator*](#_top) *implied the audit aimed more at entertainment than public policy via ‘worthy sounding gobbledegook’ and ‘cartoon like representations of various thought bubbles’. Indeed, parts of the audit would not be out of place in* [*Ripley's Believe It or Not*](#_top) *e.g. references to: eight Sydney Opera Houses could be bought with annual subsidies to public transport; 32% of prisoners await sentence; 1 in 10 adults did not access the internet during 6 months last year.*

    *The connotation of this circus: the infrastructure club wants you to believe it deserves more of your money. My comments on that relate to transport.*

    *Among the audit’s arguments for more money is future uncertainty. Yet it did not identify the right strategy for uncertainty – allow flexibility. In transport flexibility is inter-operability and pricing.*

    *Transport inter-operability should be a key matter for a national government in a federation. It is in the United States. It was a purpose of Australia federating.*

    *However, the audit seemed unaware of this. It didn’t highlight the absence of inter-operability in projects e.g. major road designs which notoriously preclude later retrofit with rail lines. It did not comment on the most outrageous breach of inter-operability since the break of rail gauge in the 19th century - Sydney Metro.*

    *The same failure to acknowledge inter-operability bedevils project assessments. It’s as if Infrastructure Australia doesn’t realise it works for a Federal government.*

    *The audit also ignored road pricing to mitigate congestion. This oversight is not new –* [*the previous audit*](#_top) *saw ‘pricing’ only as a way to raise more money. The present omission is even more odd given Infrastructure Australia’s consultants had pricing-type assumptions in the projections - no real increase in fuel costs, and CPI-linked increases in tolls.*

    *The audit presented the main transport issues as costs of road congestion and public transport crowding – projected to be $38.7bn and $1.2bn respectively in 2031. The former – while revised down by $14.5bn (27%) from the 2015 audit - is grossly overstated for at least three reasons. First, it embodies a roads bias by assuming travel by car is much more valuable than by e.g. trains. Second, it depends on nonsensical degrees of traffic congestion e.g. over 80% of an inner-city road trip being at standstill while many (18) trains run past. Third, most importantly, it does not take into account efficient road pricing.*

    *The real questions are: what would be the cost of congestion if there was efficient pricing? What projects would be justified if there was efficient pricing? Questions along these lines were posed by the pre-Abbott Infrastructure Australia. The ‘new’ organisation avoided them.*

    *Rather than consider* [*infrastructure policy failures*](#_top) *that cause congestion, the audit pointed to population growth. The* [*media interpretation*](#_top)*: more spending is needed – egged-on by comments from Infrastructure Australia:*

    *"This infrastructure boom that we are in is the new normal….If we don't continue this investment, the costs of congestion will double."*

    *On cue the* [*Leader of the Opposition*](#_top) *called for a debate on population – migration.*

    *Several State politicians (wrongly) claimed the audit ignored their pet projects e.g. WestConnex, presumably as a way to distract people from realising that most are creating new and bigger problems.* [*NSW Premier Berejiklian*](#_top) *flagged more privatisations which might enable further dumb projects – like Sydney’s West Metro – provided there is also Federal funding.*

    *Even the reputable press joined the Commonwealth lobbying. The* [*Sydney Morning Herald's coverage*](#_top) *said the Prime Minister:*

    *‘should re-examine 103 projects on the priority list, (which are) ready to go’.*

    *It added:*

    *‘individuals will have to think very carefully about transport when they buy a house and many will chose to live in the inner city or a major centre, close to all the amenities transport and jobs’*

    *These – a plea for Commonwealth help and people choosing to live in inner cities - reveal the ‘debate’ to really be a propaganda assault more far-fetched than the TV satire Utopia would dare.*

    *A case has yet to be made for the Commonwealth to even consider using your money to fund ‘congestion busting’ infrastructure. That a case should be made arises from Australia’s system of government which places relevant responsibilities on the States – not the Commonwealth - and whose mechanism of Commonwealth assistance to States is general purpose grants rather than infrastructure funding.*

    *If there is such a case for the Commonwealth to consider ‘investment’, the Prime Minister should indeed re-examine projects on Infrastructure Australia’s priority list. The reason: previous lists were based on some grossly inadequate assessments. Re-examination should be via* [*public inquiries*](#_top)*. And, of course, the Commonwealth must not fund anything that reduces prospects of inter-operability or efficient pricing.*

    *The Herald’s comment about people choosing to live in inner cities will infuriate many who cannot afford to. It ignores a widening geography of disadvantage abetted by glib talk about ’30-minute city’ or ‘three cities of Sydney’ which was considered in an earlier* [*Pearls post.*](#_top) *It is desirable to increase urban density in a way that enables choice for many rather than just those who have riches or rich parents. To do so will require thoughtful re-development of housing and transport in middle ring suburbs and reinforcement of nodes like Parramatta and Liverpool rather than just allowing luxurious and costly skyscrapers near inner city railway stations.*

    *Beyond these matters the audit described arrays of transport curios including technology, ‘micro-freight’* [*(continuing the lunacy)*](#_top)*, poor regional services, truck drivers and cruise ships. The only thread to the commentary: more money please!*

    *Finally, the audit didn’t understand some of its commissioned work. A consultant paper, using Infrastructure Australia information, showed Sydney Metro is inferior to augmentation of Sydney Trains’ system. The reason: passengers on Metro suffer a much higher crowding (37%) disbenefit than on Sydney Trains - while the passenger capacity of the systems is virtually identical. Among the implications: the Metro decisions cause unnecessary road traffic.*

    *Worse, small* [*Metro*](#_top) *tunnels preclude high capacity trains such as being considered for Paris. The Sydney Metro route may prevent other north-south rail lines across the harbour and in the CBD. Were Metro tunnels bored at Sydney Trains size and alignments the traffic problem would diminish – even if Metro trains ran for a time.*

    *That these facts conflict with Infrastructure Australia’s* [*hasty, dubious 2017 assessment*](#_top) *is pertinent given the hysteria about traffic gridlock between North Sydney and the CBD – after the Metro has opened!*

    *The ‘new’ corporate Infrastructure Australia, by deficient project assessments, contributed to this mess.*  [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Big iron <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=999RqGZatPs> [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Lee Van Cleef <https://spaghettiwestern.fandom.com/wiki/Angel_Eyes> [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/reform-has-died-a-bit-ambition-lost-in-infrastructure-audit-20190814-p52h3r> [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. A failing indicated by, for example:

    <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/earth-to-canberra.html>

    <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/earth-to-canberra-2.html>

    <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/infrastructure-principles---august-2018.html>

    <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/the-dog-that-didnt-bark.html>

    <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/wonderland-glory-and-evaluation.html>

    <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/sideshow-alley.html>

    and especially <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/weird-scenes.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. *‘Little Bill is telling Beauchamp the real story of English Bob's gunfight]*

    [***Little Bill Daggett***](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000432/?ref_=tt_ch)***:****You see, the night that Corky walked into the Blue Bottle, and before he knows what's happening, Bob here takes a shot at him! And he misses, 'cause he's so damn drunk. Now that bullet whizzing by panicked old Corky, and he did the wrong thing. He went for his gun in such a hurry that he shot his own damn toe off. Meantime Bob here, he's aiming real good, and he squeezes off another, but he misses, because he's still so damn drunk, and he hits this thousand-dollar mirror up over the bar. And now, the Duck of Death is as good as dead. Because Corky does it right. He aims real careful, no hurry...*

    [***W.W. Beauchamp***](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0007210/?ref_=tt_ch)***:****And...?*

    [***Little Bill Daggett***](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000432/?ref_=tt_ch)***:****BAM! That Walker Colt blew up in his hand, which was a failing common to that model. You see, if old Corky had had two guns instead of just a big dick, he would have been there right to the end to defend himself.*

    [***W.W. Beauchamp***](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0007210/?ref_=tt_ch)***:****Wait a minute. You mean that, English Bob killed him when he didn't even have...?*

    [***Little Bill Daggett***](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000432/?ref_=tt_ch)***:****Well, old Bob wasn't goin' to wait for Corky to grow a new hand. No, he just walked over there real slow - 'cause he was drunk - and shot him right through the liver. Pop!’*

    <https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Unforgiven> [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. <https://www.abc.net.au/7.30/why-the-congestion-clogging-our-cities-is-only/11440188> [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Xjr2hnOHiM> [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. <https://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1803.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/gladys-berejiklian-to-put-more-assets-on-the-block/news-story/8e2c167b63ae42634bc1f95b002239b4> [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/they-re-morally-corrupt-crossbenchers-slam-politics-and-take-on-crown-20190731-p52ch7.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/untitled1.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/election-2019.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2007-07-05/railcorp-blames-delays-on-blown-off-hatch/90996>

    <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/cityrail-excuses-are-blown-away/news-story/cc1cde59c60997f5f9749b6d582a7bfb?sv=c5586ef98b7f9304da5e0b20ae21890d>

    <https://7news.com.au/news/transport/sydney-train-commuter-chaos-as-all-harbour-bridge-services-grind-to-a-halt-c-414377> [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. e.g. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/quickest-cheapest-way-to-boost-sydney-s-train-services-20190305-p511y5.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Note xxxii. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. <https://johnmenadue.com/bruce-robertson-federal-government-needs-to-stop-the-magical-gas-merry-go-round-renew-economy-19-8-19/> [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. See note xxxii. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/earth-to-canberra-2.html>

    <https://www.johnmenadue.com/john-austen-infrastructure-advice-worse-than-expected/> [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. ‘*PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 6 – TRANSPORT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE*

    *Inquiry into the Sydenham-Bankstown Line conversion*

    *Terms of Reference*

    *1. That Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and Customer Service inquire into and report on aspects of the*

    *planned conversion of the Sydenham-Bankstown Line from heavy rail to metro, being the southwest part of the Sydney Metro City and Southwest project, including:*

    *(a) the adequacy of the business case and viability of Metro,*

    *(b) the consideration of alternatives for improving capacity and reducing congestion,*

    *(c) the factors taken into account when comparing the alternatives and the robustness of the evidence used in decision-making,*

    *(d) whether metro is a suitable means of transport over long distances,*

    *(e) the consultation process undertaken with, and the adequacy of information given to, community, experts and other stakeholders,*

    *(f) the impact on the environment and heritage conservation,*

    *(g) any lobbying, political donations or other influence of the public or private sector in relation to making that decision,*

    *(h) the tender process for appointing private operators,*

    *(i) the contractual arrangements entered into in respect of the project,*

    *(j) the adequacy of temporary transport arrangements during the conversion process, including for people with a disability,*

    *(k) the impact on the stations west of Bankstown, and*

    *(l) any related matter.*

    *2. That the committee report by Tuesday 31 March 2020’.*

    <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2551>

    Westconnex inquiry: <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/urbans-admonition.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-46)