# Sydenham-Bankstown metro conversion Inquiry – transcript of hearing 10 December 2010.

This note comments on the transcript of the Inquiry’s second round of hearings involving witnesses for the NSW Government.[[1]](#endnote-1)

My comments on the transcript of the first round of hearings were to the effect the evidence was unsatisfactory.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Unfortunately, I have the same essential view about the transcript of this second round and responses to some questions on notice. Details are appended.

Problems with statements include:

* Absurd propositions such as Sydney Metro should operate branch lines;
* Misleading comments such as about the exploration of options;
* Irrelevancies that may side-track the Inquiry such as on rail capacity and subsidies;
* Failure to answer questions such as reasons for small tunnel diameters;
* Contradictions such as claims: all options were considered; the key alternative to Sydney Metro – new technology for Sydney Trains - was impractical in 2013. Yet Infrastructure NSW advised the Government in 2012 the technology was ‘proven in service overseas’,
* Tautology and circularity such as the planned layout of Metro at Sydenham station being a reason to extend Metro from that station;
* Critical factual errors about the content of publications such as *Sydney’s Rail Future;*
* Unnecessarily vague answers such as on services west of Bankstown.

The transcript and responses fail to recognise the substance of criticisms made by experts. Nor do they address the very serious claim Sydney Metro decisions are influenced by bureaucratic war.

These problems are likely to further reduce public confidence in rail decision making.

The transcript includes statements the witnesses were not involved in (advising on) the key decisions. It also says Transport for NSW has the timetabling and planning functions rendering irrelevant witness views on some arrangements e.g. west of Bankstown. It alludes to governance that limits the ability of the witnesses to properly represent NSW.

In my view, the circumstances demand a most careful review of the transcript.

They also demand corroboration of assertions against identified, independent sources, preferably prior documents. To avoid wild goose chases, the Government should be asked to corroborate assertions via explicit source references – page numbers etc. – rather than mere document titles.

The matter is of the utmost gravity. Decisions (being) made could destroy the long-term viability of the Sydney rail network, severely disadvantage Western Sydney, and waste many billions of dollars.

Without positive independent confirmation of all relevant claims, and thorough and independent expert advice on the implications of the conversion of the Sydenham-Bankstown segment, the Committee should recommend a stop to all work on Sydney Metro.

J Austen

7 January 2020

1. <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/2289/UNCORRECTED%20-%20Transcript%20-%20PC%206%20-%20Sydenham-Bankstown%20Line%20Conversion%20-%2010%20December%202019.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Submissions 30 and 30a at <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2551#tab-submissions>

   And johnmenadue.com/john-austen-sydney-and-the-mock-metro/ [↑](#endnote-ref-2)