# Sydney Metro: the $66billion dollar questions – More

*Reports on a NSW Government announcement - if believed – destroy even the Government’s own flawed case for Sydney Metros. This note supplements two previous articles. For buffs, a bigger one will follow.*

**We have seen…**

Parts 1 and 2 supported John Menadue’s call for a proper a public inquiry into Sydney Metro. <https://johnmenadue.com/john-menadue-sydney-metro-a-forty-billion-dollar-deception/#comments>

They noted the public is insulted with propaganda and fantasies about Metro. They demonstrated how recent reports about ‘Paris’ options – if true - mean Metro is wrong for Sydney even on the State Government’s facile criteria of the number of trains it can operate per line.

They argued all Metro projects must be stopped now. Not merely because they waste enormous amounts of money. A more important reason is further work on Metro projects might preclude any ‘Paris option’.

The preclusion problem – small tunnels and city route - was well known and specifically warned against. There may be no need for it. However, there is no mention of it in publications by Governments and ‘independent’ official advisers.

Leading to the question: why? Answers are needed to salvage reputations.

**Not just another SPAD**

A SPAD is a train passing a red light – a signal passed at danger. This can precede a wreck. More statements from NSW indicate this is where policy and rail projects in Sydney are. There are even more problems than exposed by the Premier’s talk of Paris.

The context is Federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten’s offer of $6bn for Sydney rail. Half is for the West Metro, the other half is for the (disgraceful) Western Sydney rail plan.

The NSW Minister’s reported response: we do not want money for Western Sydney rail because it would result in another part of the rail network – the line through Parramatta, Strathfield and the CBD - being ‘overwhelmed’. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/andrew-constance-s-3-billion-train-backflip-20180702-p4zp1p.html>

‘Overwhelmed’ doesn’t mean a lack of resources to address the matter. It means too many people might catch trains between Western and eastern Sydney!

Some may dismiss the Minister’s comment as cover for political partisanship – he and the Federal Opposition Leader being of different parties. However, State Government refusal of $3bn for projects it identified – as is the case here - is unprecedented. It means NSW, after a series of rail policy SPADs, is in a wreck.

**First round implications**

Immediate implications of the Minister’s comments are disturbing.

First, the comments mean the Western Sydney rail plan is intended to minimise ridership. Lest ‘the problem’ get even bigger.

Not only is the Western Sydney rail plan set to depress ridership by bizarre ideas such as at least three gauge-separated railways, services inappropriate for demand, the wrong line going to the airport and the best line to the airport stopping 7km short, but the Ministers’ comments imply this to be intentional.

Second, the Minister’s comments suggests the ‘three cities’ of Sydney policy - which contradicts the transport plan, is not based on proper principles and doesn’t posit ‘three cities’ at all - is a con job.

The problem worrying the Minister so is people from Western Sydney using infrastructure and services in the ‘River’ and ‘Harbour’ cities. The ‘three cities’ is not to be pursued by jobs etc. close to home – in any event State Governments have little influence on jobs. Rather, it is to be furthered by something State Governments can do – affect metropolitan travel – in this case to put jobs etc. further from home out of reach. This would be elitism aiming at exclusion.

The centrepiece for Western Sydney jobs etc., indeed of the ‘three cities’ - the Western Sydney Airport and Aerotropolis – are Commonwealth initiatives. The State Government’s transport contribution – with its (implied) intention to stymie rail to there – will undermine the success of these areas and ventures.

Third, the Minister’s comments point to an unfolding disaster. What type of plan results in denial of a gift (from somebody else) to the most-needy which is certainly what Western Sydney is in transport terms? The answer is a plan which has that, and the splitting of Sydney, as an aim. An economic and social catastrophe.

The transport starting point – so we are meant to believe - is *Sydney’s Rail Future*, announced in June 2012 by then Minister, now Premier, Berejiklian. At that time both Premier O’Farrell and herself opposed a second airport for Sydney. <http://mysydneycbd.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/user-files/uploads/rail-future-web.pdf>

The ‘plan’ supposedly based on *Sydney’s Rail Future* is fundamentally inconsistent with a Western Sydney Airport. Even if not designed to stop the airport it is having that type of effect. <https://johnmenadue.com/john-austen-badgerys-creek-testing-times/>.

The ‘plan ‘has not been relevantly revised. The centrepiece of the plan – Metro - should have been junked for reasons explained in preceding articles. Even if not it should have been altered if the State Government wanted to support the new airport, ‘three cities’ jobs close to home etc. Instead - and contrary to statements in the document - the Government is cementing in Metro by tunnels too small for some other fleets.

A NSW Government supportive of the Western Sydney Airport, ‘three cities’, jobs closer to home etc – would have had the extension of the North West Metro towards the west, towards Parramatta rather than – in Sydney’s Rail Futures - to Bankstown.

Or at the very least – and important/inevitable for other reasons – a Government supportive of Western Sydney would ensure the CBD and Harbour Metro tunnels were of an adequate size for other-than-metro-trains, which might be used some time in the next century. This failure is the reason for the Minister’s concern about being ‘overwhelmed’.

Were the North West Metro extended towards Parramatta the Minister’s problem – lines through Parramatta being ‘overwhelmed’ – would not be a possibility. The offer of federal funds could have been accepted.

While not ideal for the Western Sydney Airport – termination of Metro would be far superior – these and other options to modify Metro were known. They were put to the NSW Government by its own ‘independent’ expert adviser, Infrastructure NSW, in its 2012 *State Infrastructure Strategy*.

The *Strategy* suggested extension of the North West Metro to Strathfield. By showing relevant lines carrying both Metro and Sydney Trains it also supports proper tunnel sizes – incidentally demonstrating Infrastructure NSW to be then unaware of plans to have small tunnels. <http://www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au/media/1138/sis_report_section80_print.pdf>

Yet the NSW ‘business’ case for the Metro extension – published in late 2016 but marked to industry earlier - didn’t mention the Western Sydney Airport or small Metro tunnels. <https://www.sydneymetro.info/sites/default/files/Sydney%20Metro%20CSW%20Business%20Case%20Summary.pdf>

Opportunities for revisions to policy arose in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and this year. None happened.

Metro West doesn’t count on that score. Indeed, by allocating substantial harbour crossing capacity to Bankstown instead of areas of greatest demand, the ‘plan’ threatens its effectiveness too.

Nor can credence be given to the ‘plan’ now supposedly being based on ‘hub and spokes’ public transport. Hub and spokes are (increasingly) unusual for urban rail. Where used, trains tend to run along one spoke into the hub and out another spoke because of land costs e.g. Sydney Metro.

Indeed, talk of hub and spokes points to another astounding mistake – confusion between operating patterns with infrastructure. Similar to talk of the network being tangled – the network doesn’t get tangled, trains operating on it do, hence any tangle is down to the operating pattern, the timetable.

The nature and magnitude of mistakes in arguments for Metro is unbelievable. Who could be so consistently and completely wrong? Or is something else in play?

**Back to the immediate implications**

The Minister’s comment – rejecting $3bn for Western Sydney because it might encourage pubic transport use - is not a ‘negotiating’ stance to extract more funds from the Commonwealth since it rejects money. Not because of inadequacy but because of embarrassment.

Is there fear of what might be revealed were there any modification to or review of the ‘plan’.

The fact of the Minister’s comment being a reaction, rather than considered position, is also consistent with each new step of the rail plan springing an unanticipated disaster. What next?

On 9 July new clouds appeared in the form of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal and fare rises on all public transport to cover some of the $66bn in Metro capital costs now being faced. That will be the subject of a later article.

**Further implications**

At the very least the Minister’s statement means there are monumental failures of judgement – affecting millions of people for generations - on the part of the NSW Government starting in 2012 or earlier and continuing for the last six years.

It also points to ongoing failures by State and Commonwealth ‘independent’ infrastructure advisors.

They have accepted or supported the NSW Government position, engaged in verbal contortions over matters such as ‘stand-alone’ rail systems and turn-up and go services and have not mentioned the issues of greatest significance such as small Metro tunnels.

Their apparent reliance on proponents – like State Governments – for ‘information’ is causing real harm. In the case of Sydney, the damage already looks set to be tremendous. What for their much-vaunted independence and ‘governance’ of Boards?

Other, less happy implications arise from indications becoming more consistent with a cover-up of policy mistakes.

The Premier’s and Minister for Transport recent announcements should lead to reconsideration of what is on the public record. Such reconsideration would not reveal a pretty sight. There are many unusual or inexplicable matters associated with Metro and public information about it.

Examples in the previous articles include preference to refer to Transport for NSW and MTR (metro operator) rather than experts as the source of information supposedly used to make decisions.

The unusual matters are not restricted to the NSW Government. Infrastructure NSW, Infrastructure Australia and the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure etc. also have produced some strange material.

**Conclusion**

The Premier’s comments about ‘Paris’ technology – if reports are to be believed – destroy even the Government’s biased and flawed public case for Metro.

The Minister’s comments mean Metro is a disaster in action, visibly damaging at least Western Sydney and undermining Western Sydney Airport etc. This is no concern to parties who have a ‘three cities’ of Sydney policy as a cynical con job.

Reconsideration of the public record – as would be expected after such comments – reveals unusual and puzzling matters.

However, none of the Commonwealth Government, State and Federal Oppositions and media have asked relevant questions, drawn reasonably obvious conclusions nor made the types of comments that might be expected in such circumstances.

None of this will disappear under the barrage of Government hype like comparing a test of a Metro train with the first car across the harbour bridge.

How would Dr Bradfield be remembered if the harbour bridge’s design prevented use by full-size buses? Like those who designed the Metro harbour crossing to prevent use by full-size trains?

And for the Government’s information: Sydney had driverless trains for many years – the monorail started in 1988 – on 21 July. It was a true ‘turn-up-and go’ service.

Leichardt latte-land parroting of ‘Metro West’ or distractions like a couple-of-hour survey about fast or slow trains – said to be ‘*the debate we need to have*’ – won’t help either. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/more-stops-or-faster-travel-the-metro-west-debate-we-need-to-have-20180704-p4zphe.html>.

There are more important matters to deal with. Which will take more than a bit of friendly banter by ‘planners’ in a cafe.

Until then, there is a message for the powers that be, in the words of another bubble headed booby - Robot - in the last episodes of the 60’s TV series Lost in Space:

 ‘***Why would I listen to you. Everything you say goes wrong’***

J Austen

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