# Whats new in paradise

Admit it. You’ve been wondering about events in infrastructure paradise NSW. The beagle, loyal to readers, asked for a short update. Just on events in the last week or so.

## Miracle

In a rerun of the miracle of loaves and fishes, the outgoing chief executive of Infrastructure Australia – located in bigtown, capital of Infrastructure Paradise - managed to befuddle onlookers by transforming three simple principles (What are you doing? Why? Will it work?) into eleven unintelligible points of twaddle which his organisation hasn’t and doesn’t intend to use.[[1]](#endnote-1)

The litany inter alia confirmed the separation of powers doctrine – infrastructure project proponents and State governments were carefully differentiated in the ‘principles’. Those who said State Governments are proponents – like of Westconnex, Metro, the East West Link, Cross River Rail, FreightLink, Melbourne metro etc – go and wash your mouths out!

Given this highlight, there may be some hope of Infrastructure Australia eventually realising there is a Constitution and the Commonwealth Government can’t do whatever it wants. A hope. For later. Much later probably.

## Shoosh!

Turning to the infrastructure club’s backroom, Transport for NSW paid a law firm several hundred thousand dollars (exact figure in the Telegraph 21 August now being discussed by Sweetheart and Handsome in the rabbit hutch) for advice to prevent the public from being told what is going on.

Pay to promote shoosh?

Particularly about rail. Strange. It’s not as if there is overwhelming evidence anybody in the NSW bureaucracy knows anything worth knowing about that subject.

Nonetheless plumbers, lawyers, anybody: stop the leaks!

The latest insights into information prevention include: collect and destroy all meeting papers; the monetarist dream - the clean desk policy; curtailment of emails and other forms of communication; recognising printers as a work of the devil; a ban on portable computer drives; enforcement starting with spot checks.

Is this driven by a sense of shame on the part of the illumunati? Who could blame them?

But missing, surprising given the clients esoteric technophilic tendencies, was advice on preventing routine eavesdropping and more exotic forms of thought transference, clairvoyance, astral travel to meetings, mind-melding etc. Presumably there are some parapsychologists in our post Geller/Zukhar era. Publicly spirited readers should send nominations to the Department.

And by the way, the beagle has not and will not listen to leaks from the ship of state – given the quality of what is in the public domain you would understand.

## Divine retribution

Moving on to God v. Sydney Trains: another weekend another meltdown.

This time the Almighty’s preferred instrument of wrath was a small balloon. It hit overhead wires in the tunnels in the CBD. Leading to chaos. So the story goes. The only thing missing was the clown. Or was it? [[2]](#endnote-2)

Maybe the plumber-lawyers could be asked to draft something to prevent this too. A few suggestions from the beagle: spot checks to ensure nobody packs heat or balloons; making Sydney a helium-free zone; an anti-balloon flying squad. But no suggestion about outlawing clowns – you know why.

## Suspension of arithmetic

With God on its side, why should Metro bother with mere arithmetic?

Not talking about the 6-month close down of a line opened a couple of years ago programmed to be at least 7 months. Despite which it is undoubtedly still on-time and on-budget.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Who cares? The closedown won’t end until after the election – when for a few further years at least it will be all out all change at Chatswood to wait 2 minutes (Minister’s words not mine) for a train to the city.

Ah! That’s the point. In Paradise a 3-minute headway – the fabled 20 Sydney Trains per hour over the bridge - becomes 2 minutes between trains. Well done![[4]](#endnote-4)

## Disappearing gaps

Of course, there is more in Metro land. And not just n+1 tunnel boring machines and photo ops of Ministers in white helmets and safety glasses.

Take the singular report on Channel 7 nightly news – interrupting the cavalcade of paeans for Metro – showing an EIS informed by Google Earth and noise walls along the Bankstown line so passengers can watch concrete for ages even when not in heroically long but comically small tunnels.

And ‘gap fillers’. As they say the creme de la menthe of the report - the implication being the Government in $66bn Metro majesty mode is too stingy to properly fix the stations on the Bankstown line. Instead viewers saw metal grates expanding and retracting from under the platform to meet the edge of the Metro train. Used a little overseas, and no doubt the manufacturer’s finished product is far superior to what was portrayed.

By the way, in case you missed it, the Bankstown line will be ‘turn up and wait’. There will be more trains – 6 Metro trains compared with the current 4 Sydney Trains per hour off-peak. But in the world of arithmetic this means a 36% reduction in seats.

But back to mechanical gap fillers. They are mentioned in the documentation – not exactly highlighted but mentioned nonetheless.[[5]](#endnote-5)

Not so on Channel 7 anymore. And the beagle hasn’t found the story on their website too. Not only the gaps disappear!

Lesson learned?

## Spoilsport

As ever there is so much more – too much to mention now.

So we might leave our little visit to Paradise with comments from that notorious spoilsport – the Auditor General – who again had the audacity to question the wisdom of the Sydney light rail contract. The contract of a project with a $500m (25%) cost blowout (so far) and billion or so dollar litigation against the State.

This time the question was about an (unusual?) clause limiting penalties payable to the State for late completion – to 15 days. Guess what? The project is late by somewhat more than 15 days – let’s say at least 365 days.[[6]](#endnote-6)

The Telegraph, entranced by goings on in Canberra seemed to lose the plot and bagged the Premier who – as Transport Minister – was said to be responsible for this.

Meanwhile even the Reserve Bank boss was chiming in reportedly using the light rail project to draw attention to poor oversight of major infrastructure projects. Though what he said was a bit more revealing than the headline with the usual ‘governance’ guff of ‘put me in charge of the project’ or ‘let’s have an “independent” assessment / cost benefit analysis’.

It was: ‘*the selection of projects was “not all that it should be”’*. Does that mean there are some dud infrastructure projects?. Perhaps even what he calls the ‘tram’ (whatever happened to the ‘iron pony’?) near his home in Randwick. A fair cop guv? So what would he make of some rather larger projects to the west of Anzac Parade – or even Phillip St?[[7]](#endnote-7)

And how about George St in central Sydney aka the construction site? Apart from the odd electric shock to passers-by, it is looking much like what one would expect in infrastructure paradise. Plenty of white helmets, tools, concrete, half-finished bits, safety induction signs, flashing lights and dust.[[8]](#endnote-8)

A triumph to be crowned by the out of cost-control ‘cloud arch’ signifying another wtf moment in Australia’s self-proclaimed ‘global city’.[[9]](#endnote-9)

That’s all. For now.

J Austen

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1. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/infrastructure-principles---august-2018.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/inside-sydney-s-train-chaos-and-how-a-balloon-shut-parts-of-it-down-20180818-p4zybs.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/sydney-rail-shake-up-forces-more-commuters-to-switch-trains-at-central-20180817-p4zy1a.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/dogs-breakfast-for-all.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.sydneymetro.info/sites/default/files/Sydney%20Metro%20City%20%26%20Southwest%20Industry%20Briefing%20Update%20November%202017.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/penalties-for-delays-to-sydney-s-light-rail-capped-inquiry-told-20180820-p4zyhu.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/rba-governor-cites-light-rail-project-as-example-of-poor-oversight-20180817-p4zy48.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/she-thought-she-was-going-to-die-girl-taken-to-hospital-after-electric-shock-near-sydney-light-rail-20180611-p4zksj.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-12/cloud-arch-sydney-causes-further-controversy-over-cost/10111130> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)