# Rail gun – the Hamilton dawdler

*Once there was a train called the Newcastle Flyer…… with, according to Wikipedia, ‘a fastest journey time of 2 hours 18 minutes’ between Central and Newcastle stations.*

*But given the ‘superior speed and level of comfort’ of electric trains it was ‘inevitable that demand for the Newcastle Flyer would decrease…..’ and the train was replaced in 1988.[[1]](#endnote-1)*

The NSW Government claims the State has an embarrassment of riches in the wake of its privatisations. As nobody sensible expects this to last, the players are getting in for their chop – and trying to lock in pet projects. Exhibit A: two stadiums east of Sydney’s centroid.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Transport may have to share the riches with others. But it has the mortgage on embarrassment.

Exhibit B: Newcastle-Sydney rail. Last year, in a moment of inspiration, the Federal Coalition Government put up $20m for studies into higher speed rail. Forget about the press releases etc. This was a cry of frustration, probably from the top, about the ineptitude of its Departments; most recently demonstrated by publication of their bizarre ideas about high speed rail.[[3]](#endnote-3)

No doubt the Prime Minister thought it might be a good idea to try to mitigate pressures on capital cities. Encouraging development in or commuting from second tier cities like Geelong, Wollongong and Newcastle via faster – rather than high speed – rail might help.

A serious attempt might see on-board commuting time of around 1 hour. This 1 hour is the magic number for commuting, not the fantasy of the 30-minute city. Ask anyone who currently commutes. Or who will be reclassified to ‘another’ city because they live more than 30 minutes from the CBD or the glorious beaches.

How did the NSW Government, also Coalition, respond? They put in a proposal for a study into a 2-hour rail trip ‘Newcastle’-Sydney. Which, of course, the Commonwealth Minister accepted. Maybe if the Prime Minister had remained in charge a proposal more attuned to the aims of the $20m would have been forthcoming.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Why a 2-hour target? Getting to the CBD in 1 hour will forever be ‘a challenge’ because of Metro. And none of the powers that be want to draw this to attention.

Nor did they apparently have the wit to suggest a 1-hour ride to a Sydney node like Hornsby. Or if they did, they were afraid of mention of Chatswood, which in Metro-land will be forever more than 1 hour from Newcastle.

So if not 1 hour, why 2? The real reason is more likely that a 2-hour transit can be done now – if there are no other trains on the track and it made few if any stops. Presumably somebody tested this out in a quiet time and raced up to tell the Premier. There is a certain wisdom in setting a target that has been (secretly) already met – a lesson learned from the ‘State Plan’ of a former Labor Government.

The State Coalition has learned more from that Government – evidenced by a West Metro Parramatta-CBD now re-re-announced, or announced *thrice.* Big-noted in ‘Western Sydney’ recently, with no less than a promise for a new station for Westmead which, for students of geography, is not between Parramatta and the CBD.

West Metro trains are to be quicker than the to-be-studied Hamilton dawdler; Hamilton being a suburb of Newcastle where trains now terminate under the State’s far sighted policy which tore up the track between Hamilton and Newcastle. Part of the ‘idea’ for a world record unit cost light rail tram to run all of 2km from near Hamilton to …..Newcastle.[[5]](#endnote-5)

West Metro trips between Parramatta and the CBD around 25km are supposedly to take 20 minutes, including up to 10 stops.[[6]](#endnote-6)

Hmm. If we allow 45 seconds dwell time per each of 8 intermediate stops, West Metro running time would be 14 minutes; an average of 100kmh after taking acceleration and braking into account. A cruising speed of say 160kmh achieved from zero almost every second minute, with most people standing, and up to a train every 2 minutes. Bullshit you say?[[7]](#endnote-7)

In comparison the Hamilton dawdler is to traverse 164km of existing route, perhaps with 5 stops. Average running speed would be a touch under 85kmh.

Students! The beagle would be happy to be corrected on the arithmetic!

But failing that it looks like another humiliation of the transport portfolio is in prospect.

Yet there is a ray of hope, from near the lands whence NSW is buying trains too wide for some Sydney tunnels.[[8]](#endnote-8)

China is reportedly a supplier to NSW Government railways.[[9]](#endnote-9)

It has supposedly modified a warship to take a railgun. Such a gun uses electromagnetic force to propel projectiles many times faster than traditional artillery.[[10]](#endnote-10)

Were a railgun obtained by NSW it might be deployed to get West Metro running to a timetable some claim will happen. If it can be so used, let’s hope the State doesn’t again ‘forget’ about Newcastle.

An alternative is to give them a rocket – figurative, not literal.

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1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newcastle_Flyer> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Stadiums: <https://www.smh.com.au/national/sydney-stadium-train-wreck-where-to-from-here-20180319-p4z51n.html>, <https://www.smh.com.au/sport/nrl/roy-column-on-stadia-20180320-p4z593.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See higher speed rail articles at https://www.thejadebeagle.com/rail.html [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.theherald.com.au/story/5274881/newcastle-to-sydney-trains-may-lose-an-hour-under-fast-rail-plan/> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.theherald.com.au/story/5124942/35-million-cost-blowout-on-the-newcastle-light-rail-project-auditor-general-finds/> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. West metro <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/the-sydney-suburbs-on-list-of-station-sites-for-new-metro-line-20180323-p4z5vw.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. If: distance 25km, dwell time for 8 intermediate stations of 45seconds, acceleration/deceleration for 30 seconds. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Tunnels too narrow <http://www.news.com.au/technology/innovation/nsws-2-billion-new-trains-are-too-wide-to-get-through-tunnels/news-story/47bd2ee36f43cd3cdd2819078feb6011> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <https://www.businessinsider.com.au/sydneys-new-trains-will-be-built-in-china-in-a-1-7-billion-deal-2016-12> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Railgun <http://www.newsweek.com/china-says-building-electromagnetic-railgun-seen-leaked-warship-photos-stunned-844932> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)