# A reply

As pressure is coming on the NSW Government for its infrastructure decisions, a number of comments have disagreed with my views on Sydney Metro etc.[[1]](#endnote-1)

A good thing.

Some comments suggest my ignorance or misinterpretation of technical matters. Which might be the case.[[2]](#endnote-2)

My articles have drawn exclusively on material in the public domain. This material is identified in endnotes to articles at thejadebeagle.com. In effect, disagreements are with this material.

Yet there is a much more important point.

As suggested in many articles, most recently *‘Glory without power’,* I have two primary concerns.[[3]](#endnote-3)

One relates to public policy in Australia. Especially advice put to governments and explanations put to the public.

The other relates to opportunities for participation in society.

Transport examples are used to illustrate these.

However, transport is not the underlying concern, less still mobility or arguments about technical characteristics of networks or vehicles.

For example, I assert the essential problem with road policy is not pricing, planning, standards, truck access, mode bias, politics or pork barrelling.

It is a lack of honesty. Public examples of less than honest practice and advice are cited in relevant articles. The poor public policy arising effectively reduces access to opportunity, especially for society’s most vulnerable. Who, for economists, are those likely to generate the highest marginal benefits from greater participation.

In policy terms rail is more important than roads for medium to large cities, like Sydney. This is because of its pervasive and durable effects on access to opportunity.

Of itself this is not an argument for or against more rail or more funding. However, it does mean rail policy should be very carefully and publicly developed. Keeping purpose to the fore.

Sydney rail policy is an important case of my concerns.

Shorn of interpretations that my comments about Metro are anti or pro rapid transit:

1. Metro fundamentally affects the geography of opportunity in Sydney;
2. Metro decisions are not explicable by information in the public domain;
3. Much official information in the public domain is wrong;
4. Unofficial information said to support Metro has not been properly tested;
5. The issues are apolitical and have occurred under Governments of both major parties.

In these circumstances a public inquiry is warranted to:

1. Identify relevant facts;
2. Make a credible statement of reasons;
3. Suggest what should be done.

The place to test Sydney rail assertions, such as made by myself, in public material or by correspondents, is in a formally constituted public inquiry. The consequences are too serious to be resolved by chat.

Yet it needs to be said there appears to be no real attempt to answer two pivotal technical matters raised in effect by Ron Christie AM, John Menadue AO and myself:

1. The purpose of Metro tunnels having small diameters;
2. Whether, and if so why, the harbour-CBD route precludes a later further route for double-decks.

Because of their grave implications, these are likely to be central issues in a public inquiry.

In my view, the absence of an overwhelmingly cogent explanation of these matters makes a formal public inquiry inevitable.

J Austen

26 October 2018

1. For views, see for example: <https://johnmenadue.com/john-austen-inquiry-into-sydney-metro-part-1/> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For example responses to:

   <https://www.thefifthestate.com.au/urbanism/infrastructure/sydneys-transport-planning-flawed/>

   <https://johnmenadue.com/john-austen-pain-before-more-pain-and-then-no-gain-in-berejiklians-growing-sydney-transport-mess/> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/glory-without-power.html>

   And previously for example:

   https://johnmenadue.com/john-austen-australian-freight-policy-after-the-chainsaw-part-3/

   <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/commonwealth-urban-transport.html>

   <https://johnmenadue.com/john-austen-bill-shorten-and-western-sydney-rail/>

   https://johnmenadue.com/john-austen-the-nsw-infrastructure-mess-keeps-getting-worse/

   <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/governance.html>

   <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/williams-case.html>

   <https://johnmenadue.com/john-austen-roads-another-year-of-inaction-and-congestion-causing-deficits/>

   <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/austral-obscura-1.html>

   <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/roads-3-htfu.html>

   <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/australian-infrastructure-plan.html>

   <https://johnmenadue.com/john-austen-and-luke-fraser-urbane-transport-police-part-3-of-3/> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)