# Sydney salutes the toilet gang

You remember the big swell of ’74? During Gough’s great bird, Nixon’s impeachment and Keith Richards first appearance on the ‘most likely to die’ list. Just 6 months after Tommy and Cliff won the fight but lost the game against Bozo and Manly at the cricket ground.

While Mr Squiggle rode the airwaves, real waves rumbled the beaches of bigtown and beyond. Boomerang breaking more than a mile out to sea, a freighter snapped in two at Stockton, the cigars at Bondi turned into cigarillos. And South Cronulla…. gone!.

Which brings us to the toilet gang.

Eloura became the sand closest to Sydney’s railway; Woolooware station up the road.

Everyone in the shire – that is east of the Woronora - had a beach. ‘Locals only’ was the natural progression after the oppressive heel of local government – licencing of boards – had been removed.

But not at Eloura on the sandhills, right next to the infamous Wanda Beach. Visitors ventured there.

Yet even it felt the wrath of the swell, losing way too much sand.

Afterwards there was a straight jump from the amenities block into the water. So the dunny was the hang-out; ergo the toilet gang. Not much good at anything other than wasting time, crayon drawings worse than Squiggle’s, supporting the Sharks and plotting in vain to keep billy Bankstowners away from the sacred shores.

Localism at its finest, replete with blue flannelette shirts – green was for movie stars.

Lord only knows where the gang members are now – some have gone to their reward, others are quite respectable, but the rest? As the poet says ‘one has one’s suspicions’.

Suspicions raised by the bilge parading as ‘planning’ for Sydney. Take a look at a ‘discussion starter’.



Pat Lovell would have sacked Squiggle for this mess, or just for the colossi of Rhodes. Not to mention leaving a few places untouched by the city sink holes. Or forgetting Tracy Island.

Just as the intro to this article is a blast from the past, the ‘plan’ has a distinctly retro feel. Apart from showcasing the Whitlam-years-burnt-orange so beloved of the toilet gang, the map seems inspired by some sort of retro-fit of Sydney to the idiot rail policy being inflicted on its basin.

Roads aren’t to blame. After all the jewel in the tiara - the $20bn or so mighty Westconnex supposedly justified by tempting westie vehicles into the CBD - wouldn’t have cars meekly tootling around lesser places as per the map’s Coriolis influenced eddies.

Nor can you blame the ‘30 minute city’ fantasy where facilities are to be provided not once, not twice, but ……. thrice in the Emerald metropolis! So what if one of the trinity of cities is yet to appear? Or if another – ‘Greater Parramatta’ – only gets an iron pony instead of the necessary iron horse?

The 30 minute city: *‘where most people can access jobs, services and other everyday needs within 30 minutes of where they live using public transport’*.

Ah!. The planner’s version of Hawkie’s ‘no child will live in poverty’, changed to ‘no child will need to live in poverty’ after a jolt of reality. Yes, that’s better: *‘no one will need to live more than 30 minutes ……*.’

God bless those little orange arrows. Like cupid’s they make you fall in love with the seductive city centres. If you live elsewhere, beyond their reach: take a good look at yourself!

A confession before we move on: beagle maxima culpa. Its home is a good public-transport-hour away from the State Government’s nearest ‘Service NSW Centre’. On a good day – ignoring warnings about ‘ongoing bus delays’. Obviously it needs to move closer to Gregory Hills.

When the plan becomes a bit too hard, probably about now, the experts can always distract by prattling about urban consolidation, a future run by autonomous vehicles, Jetsons replays and other technological wonders.

But back to the story: so the blame falls on rail!

Or is it blame?

The map has a code: the cognoscenti will discern efforts to prevent beach bathing by the unwashed. Cleverly camouflaged by a savant grasp of detail east of Anzac Parade, it keeps beaches much more than a half hour away from the vast bulk of Sydney’s population! A task worthy of a very expensive and grandly titled strategy and Greater Commission.

While deservedly grandiose the idea of keeping the beach beyond reach is certainly not new.

Those memorable predecessors to the current lot, Carr’s Government, had their own salute to surf localism; kyboshing a short extension of the railway to Bondi. Presumably supported if not urged by the much-monied at the better end of the line-to-be. Much face too with the boys back home in the ‘Bra.

Our present leaders are using Metro rail to make travel harder and less comfortable – especially for those ‘towners.

Avoiding improvements to the Cronulla line or a line to the northern beaches is also great credit to the powers that be. As is putting improvements to the western line at the bottom of the queue.

By the way, should someone tell the cartographers that the much-hyped Metro goes to Rouse Hill? Or is a metro that far into suburbia just too far-fetched?

Their cute map is there to prove we were told, to be later emended to ‘consulted’, about the plan.

Its details are no mere eccentricity. There is a key point: THE shire remains untouched by the little orange arrows and has no, repeat no, ‘strategic centre’. Not even Shark Park, home of the premiers.

Yes Harold Holt, the map means the porch light that lured travellers has been turned off. At least there was one real outcome of the two great ‘summits’ of 2016; April’s future transport gig and October’s decider.

Take note peons!!

Wouldn’t it be easier to put up a fence? Or apply the Government’s dictum about the goodness of big fat tolls to Tom Uglys and Captain Cook bridges. And encourage them to be daubed with ‘locals only’ tags which would incidentally reduce the dangerous practice of train surfing?

Why even mention places in THE shire? It might encourage….them.

As ever for urban planners – the authors lack vision.

Nonetheless, despite shortcomings of vision and fencing, the current ‘strategy’ is surely a salute to the ideals of the toilet gang, fittingly in orange crayon.

I wonder how the gang would salute back.

Or whether a groundswell will ever deep-six outrageously selfish egotism.

Discussion start that.

J Austen

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