

I attended the Sydney light Rail Community Reference Group on Tuesday Dec 2, 2014.

First a few comments:

- These notes are my personal notes from the meeting NOT ANY OFFICIAL notes. They are extensive as I prefer to note what happens at the time rather than rely on memory.
- They are significantly longer than minutes.
- I must have misinterpreted what the role of this forum was supposed to be, its terms of reference and its operation.

"The Sydney Light Rail (SLR) Community Reference Group is being established as a consultative group to provide advice and make recommendations on initiatives that would engage and support communities affected along the alignment including identifying potential mitigations of impacts during the construction period."

At the November meeting both the Chair and Project leader discussed the forum acting as a conduit for information to and from the community, to clarify any concerns and ensure a fully engaged community. Numerous statements made at the December meeting appeared to contradict those goals.

Some of the other reps:

- ◇ The Chair is also the Chair for the Sydney Light Rail Advisory Board overseeing the project.
- ◇ The Leichhardt City Council rep's role at LCC is "Team Leader Environmental Health"
- ◇ The Randwick City Council rep's role at RCC is "Communications Coordinator"
- ◇ The Sydney City Council rep's role at SCC is "Senior Communications Advisor"
- ◇ One 'community' rep is an ex-TfNSW employee
- ◇ One 'community' rep is an ex-senior advisor to a Transport Minister

At the previous meeting the LCC rep asked a number of very pertinent questions about the imminent demolition of the Olivia Gardens apartment block which was the topic of the meeting. They also asked about the general 'operating conditions' required to be followed by the various contractors. Together we asked a number of questions about the pre-demolition contamination checks. Not all those questions were answered.

The LCC rep asked **why the CSELR had been given DOUBLE the normal margin above 'background noise levels'** compared with virtually any other project or development in NSW. Normally one of the conditions of approval is to contain 'demolition/construction' noise to pre-project start 'background' noise measurements + 5 decibels.

The CSELR has been given 'background noise' plus 10 decibels. The response from the Team was that it was not a project team decision and they would abide with whatever conditions had been set by the Minister.

- I did not think the draft November minutes that had been sent around gave a 'true & fair' view of the previous meeting.
- I noted this and sent in a number corrections and amendments mostly for missed questions.
- On the morning of December 2, I received a phone call from TfNSW that no changes would be made to the minutes but would be noted elsewhere.

- I raised the Aust Institute of Company Directors guidelines for minute taking.
- I pointed out that I was being misrepresented – TfNSW responded it was sure that would have been changed.
- Asked for copy of amended minutes to be sent to me pre-meeting but they had not been signed off by the Chair.

Later that day at the meeting:

- The minutes had not been amended in any way.
- I objected to being misquoted and the minutes not reflecting what had been asked, answered or to which an answer had been promised.
- Chair stated that TfNSW was standardising all minutes across different meetings and did not want too much detail. Roughly 2 minute discourse on why it must be this way etc.
- I asked why I was misquoted and why questions agreed to be answered by TfNSW or the contractor had been left out, no answers yet received - in violation of 10-business-day response to questions (as per TfNSW terms of reference - I incorrectly stated 10 business days. It is in fact 7).

Terms of Reference for the Sydney Light Rail Community Reference Group

"Where a response cannot be given at the meeting, questions shall be taken on notice and a reply provided within 7 working days subsequent to the session."

- The Chair responded: "**Oh, it was never intended we'd respond directly back to the Community Reps. It will be noted in our management papers online.**"
- I then asked: "So the questions have been answered? Where can I find them or have the terms of reference been violated on the first outing?"
- The response from the Chair and the CSELR Project leader was that they didn't know and would have to look into it.
- I asked when and whether they would communicate it back to us this time?
- **NO was the response by the Chair.**

One community rep was keen for this questioning of the accuracy of the minutes – of whether unanswered questions would ever be answered etc – to finish, and started responding to my questions in place of the TfNSW team or the Chair. The rep objected that they did not want 30- or 40-page minutes.

I pointed out that:

- my amendments added about half to 2/3rds of a page
- the minutes are supposed to reflect what transpires at a meeting
- that if an MP (for example) looked at the minutes they would get the wrong impression of what was asked by the community reps.
- that many outstanding questions committed to be answered subsequently had disappeared and comments attributed to me were incorrect.

New news:

- ◇ The survey digging of the 8 CBD intersections will be finished by Xmas. It had been due to finish Dec 28 but a couple of businesses asked for it to finish before then.
- ◇ The utilities for George & Bridge/Grosvenor, Essex, Hunter and one other intersection will start being moved in early January causing some traffic disruption.

Public Exhibition of significant changes

Public exhibition & submissions on **10 changes** opens Dec 3 and runs for two weeks only.

World Square platform - Gone

- ◇ TfNSW stated as it is only about 550m from the Town hall stop to the one prior to World Square so they save 40 seconds journey time on each trip. That's what they think the deceleration, stop and acceleration costs per stop.
- ◇ TfNSW then added that the World Square stop would be the LR's equivalent of the Cahill Expressway - people would be criticising it. The gradient of George St there is too steep, so they'd have to excavate and put up walls on the platforms.
- ◇ So TfNSW scrapped the stop.

Third rail not batteries for wire-free George St

- ◇ The winning consortium, equipment & signals provider Alstom, proposed using a 'powered' third ground rail instead of batteries and charging at each stop along George St.
- ◇ The project leader had been concerned about batteries and gave an example of on a hot day heading south going uphill along George St a cab turns in front of the tram and stops to pick up a passenger and the tram has to stop, full of people with the air conditioning on full, electric brakes on – that'll drain the batteries in no time and leave it stranded until we can get another train to push it to the stop to charge.
- ◇ The third rail uses induction charging. It has a sensor box every 20m that only electrifies the line when the tram is there. So it is perfectly safe.

I asked if this requires any drainage to ensure there is no problem in a typical Sydney deluge? TfNSW - No it does not electrify the ground.

Anzac Parade Tunnel change in construction method

- ◇ Was going to be a boxed method where a small excavator has a shield/box around it that is slowly pushed forward as the excavator slowly grinds down the wall.
- ◇ Not appropriate method for the area.
- ◇ The soil in this area is sand, so it would keep collapsing. The Consortium said it would take years longer as they'd have to drill holes over the entire length of the excavation and force grout into the sand to stabilise it. This would add a huge cost on top of what was allowed for.
- ◇ Their solution is to do a staged cut and cover which will take 3 years for the width of Anzac Parade not the entire Moore Park Tunnel.
- ◇ This will see one extra mature tree go, so now 10, up from 9, as well as both root and canopy trimming of a number of others.
- ◇ The road lanes will be diverted to the left and to the right as the cut & cover progresses. This diversion phase will last 18 months.

Surry Hill substation

- ◇ Consortium proposes moving it to Moore Park side of Eastern Distributor (ED) and placing it inside the abutments for the tunnel entrance with ventilation etc through there.
- ◇ There will be a pedestrian and cycleway on either side of the LR bridge over the ED but at road level on South Dowling with the new traffic lights.

Randwick Racecourse Stop no longer at Randwick Racecourse but on Centennial Park land

- ◇ Randwick Racecourse lobbied to have it moved away from the racecourse.
- ◇ It will no longer run directly in front of the proposed 170 suite, 8 storey hotel on the racecourse at the intersection with Alison Rd & Darley Rd.
- ◇ There is a cost to the community though.
- ◇ **The right hand turn from Alison Rd into Darley Rd IS GONE.** No more direct access to Centennial Park from Alison Rd heading west.
- ◇ This will instead re-route traffic through local streets as the closest alternate access is via Danger St roughly a 2 km diversion.
- ◇ Approximately **20 mature trees from the end of the existing bus way through to Darley Rd** will be pulled out. The LR will extend to Darley Rd and all trees go.

The overflow for the Centennial Park flood levee to be removed

- ◇ This will save money for the construction of the stabling facility between the racecourse and Doncaster Rd.
- ◇ TfNSW Acknowledge it will worsen flooding of Centennial park and Robertson Rd housing triangle but "we'll deal with that in the future".
- ◇ TfNSW propose raising the levee by 30 cm for about a 300m length directly opposite the racecourse.
- ◇ This would increase the water behind the levees by over 30,000 cubic metres or by over 30,000 tonnes.
- ◇ This causes the worst flooding north of Alison Rd but 'improves flooding through Kensington.'

I asked how this could be? TfNSW - The Kensington flooding will be slightly less deep but only a little but the duration of the flooding will be less, and is much better for the stabling yard.

I pointed out that not long ago the fire service and SES were down for a number of days pumping the water out from behind the levy (actually in early 2000s) for up to 6 days (I think it was) as there were fears the levees would collapse and swamp Kensington.

I asked how can you increase the pressure on them by thousands of tonnes and then allow 100+ tonne metal wheeled trains rocketing by on steel tracks causing significant vibrations? The fire tenders had to be placed as far as possible from the levees for fear that the minor vibrations from their pumps could cause the levees to collapse.

A community rep interrupted saying that "They're the experts not you, you can't know that."

The question was not answered.

Another rep asked about whether a detailed flood study had been done for north of Alison Rd? TfNSW - said it will be done by the consortium in the future.

The rep then asked how it could go on public display without it? TfNSW said it was not a problem.

Trains to be approx 66+m long

- ◇ To be double coupled (2 x 33+m trains) AT ALL TIMES.

I questioned 'crashworthiness' and buff strength. I quoted a US example I uncovered post TfNSW's Nov 5 claim that 'there are dozens of LR operating around the world with trams longer than 60m'. US regulations saw EU approved 20m train weight of 22.5 tonnes increased to 32.5 tonnes to meet US standards.

TfNSW responded that they'd never heard of any problems.

A community rep added: "You don't know what you're talking about."

I added that I had spoken with the Australian National Rail Safety Regulator. I learnt that the opening of the Inner West LR extension was delayed as TfNSW had not sought approval and some changes were required.

The community rep responded: "Rubbish, they're experts."

I asked, "Are the Inner West Light Rail independently accessible for the mobility impaired yet?"

TfNSW - "They can access them."

I clarified - "That was not what I asked, I know that at several of the stations that unless the mobility impaired can attract the attention of station staff to come and get them they cannot get to the LR."

The community rep suggested I did not know what I was talking about.

The Chair intervened and suggested we move on.

Platforms will be 68m long

Grosvenor platform has to become an island platform as not enough width in George St, even with offset platform design (now offset at Grosvenor), so side platforms gone, Allows for one left turn bay to appear (looks about 2 car lengths long).

Frequency

- ◇ TfNSW stated that previously peak hour frequency was to be **one train every 3 minutes from Circular Quay**.
- ◇ Now it will be one every 4 minutes.
- ◇ Solves a number of issues (Transport Minister has repeatedly denied any flaws in the project)
- ◇ Less interruptions for traffic lights (any reduction from current traffic light phase times significantly decreases other motor vehicle throughput)
- ◇ Less total time for the trams to pass through intersections per hour (correct for some intersection and wrong for others)
- ◇ Trams going at a faster speed when the end clears the intersection (correct for some intersection and wrong for others)
- ◇ **More capacity** (Transport Minister claimed 15% day one increase, previously stated 6,000 passengers an hour, so implies now 6,900 an hour. Currently the 20 bus routes to be eliminated can carry over 17,000 passengers an hour - still over 60% cut in public transport capacity).

- ◇ Increasing capacity from day one by 15% and up to 33% more capacity throughout the entire day.
- ◇ **Increasing the evening frequency from one every TWENTY minutes to one every 12 minutes.**

I will stand corrected but I do not ever recall hearing that off-peak services were ever going to be just 6 trains an hour (3 to Kingsford & 3 to Randwick). Does anyone recall that? In multiple places it talked about off-peak frequency being half peak-hour frequency.

I asked does this mean you've changed the initial fleet size from 20 train sets to 30 or more now? And that's why the frequency has dropped?"

TfNSW responded that it was something like that but that's not why the frequency has dropped at all. The frequency is less as the capacity is more.

A community rep commented that we didn't need all this detail and I should stop interrupting.

Changes to Moore Park Stop

- ◇ SCG Trust objected to the two storey concourse model.
- ◇ The trust did not like the vista across the park to the SCG SSG spoilt by a 2 story station.
- ◇ Following discussions with the successful consortium it's been decided to have an underground solution that only opens for special events.

A community rep asked how the Sydney Boys High School and Sydney Girls High School students get there if the underground is shut? Will they be forced to cross the tracks in huge numbers? Is there room on the platforms? Where is the bridge located in relation to the platform? How do they get from the bridge to the platform?

TfNSW pointed out where the bridge was and mentioned that the students will cross the rail lines.

The community rep asked whether that was safe?

The Chair responded that Board has safety as its paramount concern.

The community rep asked why make them cross the rails then?

TfNSW responded that the operator may treat the students as a daily 'special event' and open the underground concourse.

A Council rep asked how mobility impaired would access it on 'special events' as they can't use stairs, any lifts will be crowded and most likely inaccessible?

TfNSW responded that there will be staff manning the barriers and they'll let them across if needed so they don't have to use the underground concourse.

I asked how do cyclists get back to the bike path? And how do mobility impaired students access it?

The Chair intervened stating that we were getting into too much detail and the contract is not even signed. This is all being put on public display for people to make submissions. Let's move on.

Realignment of Alison Rd & Anzac Parade entry for the Kingsford route

- ◇ Kingsford direction trains will now come out near the blocked off Robertson Rd and head into the middle of Anzac Parade well before the Alison/Anzac intersection.
- ◇ This takes out Anzac Parade road lanes and may negate the car parking that was to be given back near ES Marks Stadium (not certain though).
- ◇ RMS are said to like it.

Special Services

- ◇ There will be daily special services to deal with surge capacity demand, like for SBHS and SGHS for example.

A community rep asked if they would cope with over 2,000 students from 3 to 3.15pm?

TfNSW responded that'll just require two services each way, not even a special service.

The community rep replied that was wrong and that the 2,000+ all head west to Central. In addition there are many more students who catch buses in other directions currently. The 2,000 referred to were just on the 610 express service to Central that is to be eliminated.

TfNSW responded that it would be no problem and would all be worked out.

The community rep replied that it must be worked out before the event.

I pointed out that currently there are 21 buses leaving in a 9 minute window in the afternoon. Also that I have done the modelling and there still is nowhere near the required capacity.

Another community rep responded that they're bigger trams and I was wrong.

I mentioned that the modelling was adjusted for the October 23 and October 27 capacity announcements. TfNSW has already said it increases capacity from day one by 15%, that's hourly capacity up to 6,900. At 3pm the students from the schools will be competing with passengers heading into the city who have been forced onto the train by the other 19 routes that have been eliminated. This includes all the UNSW students finishing for the day generally starting from 2.30pm as well as all the other schools getting out as well as the impact from the loss of the cross-regional buses - M10 and M50. It could take up to 45 minutes to clear SBHS and SGHS students.

The Chair intervened stating that this was too much detail and we should move on.

Another community rep stated that with the flooding, the water just pours into Doncaster Avenue, like a river, raising part of the levy will only delay the over-flow not stop it.

TfNSW responded that it would work as they've looked at it.

TfNSW then mentioned some conjecture about the moving a stop back into Wansey Rd. They stated that they were just toying with that idea and had decided against it. They suggested that there'd be some good changes for Wansey Rd.

The community rep asked why move the racecourse stop over the road? Since all the people from special events are predominantly at the racecourse and you're making them cross the road?

TfNSW responded that they've **added another traffic light intersection** in front of the stabling facility.

I asked whether that had been missed out previously as it was required for the trains to safely enter/exit the stabling facility?

The community rep pointed out that the racecourse crowds pour out of the racecourse, often the 'worse for wear', and questioned the safety of getting them to negotiate the road crossing? They mentioned that currently barriers are erected to stop them falling into the road.

TfNSW responded that it would be safe.

Another community rep suggested a possible solution. With a single line to the Racecourse following the old route and only use it on race days.

TfNSW responded that the consortium can have a look at that. The real benefit is that it makes the stop easier for all the people in the area bounded by Darley/Alison/Cook to get to the train.

I asked that if that was the objective why not move it east of the Darley Rd intersection?

TfNSW responded that there's no room.

I mentioned that there's a traffic island, merging traffic from the TAFE and the service station. If you're serious about improving the outcome for that area then buy the service station, combine it with the traffic island etc and make it closer to them, one major road crossing less."

TfNSW responded that it wouldn't work.

The Chair intervened mentioning that the meeting had gone over time and closed the meeting. The Chair mentioned that the Project Director would stay around to answer any more questions.

I asked the Chair what was the time frame for getting back to us on the unanswered questions?

The Chair responded that they'll get in touch.
As of 5pm December 9 - they have not.
