



# Mayors unite for light rail

**It's the next step to meet the energy crisis and demand for better public transport**

In a move that reflects growing local government frustration with the state's failure to provide critical new public transport and cycling infrastructure, councils are stepping up the campaign to support light rail. The Inner City Mayors' Forum has agreed to develop an integrated transport strategy for Sydney to provide the leadership and direction NSW desperately needs.

Several councils in the inner city alliance view light rail projects as the logical next step to meet the energy crisis and burgeoning demand for public transport. Leichhardt, Marrickville and Ashfield councils specifically support extension of light rail from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill. City of Sydney is sympathetic and has long advocated the extension of the current system to Circular Quay, Barangaroo and Green Square.

According to an email recently sent to mayors and key council transport coordinators by the City of Sydney's Senior Transport Planner, "At the Inner City Mayors Forum on 18 March, the Mayors discussed the need to identify priority projects which would form part of an Integrated Transport Strategy for the Inner City, focussing primarily but not entirely, on public transport.

"The City of Sydney has agreed to coordinate the preparation of a list of the priority strategic transport issues or projects within each local government area, for consideration by the Mayors at the next Forum scheduled for 27 May 2009."

Genia Macaffery, president of the Local government and Shires Association, has agreed to co-ordinate this move with the Western Sydney Organisation of Councils, in her capacity as Mayor of North Sydney.

The initiative is particularly important because many projects, such as the light rail extension, would benefit several adjoining local government areas. It also opens an opportunity for local government to directly approach the Rudd Government for funding.

According to Marrickville Mayor, Sam Iskandar, "Marrickville Council is committed to support an extension of the light rail and has been working with other councils to promote the scheme. We have argued for many years that light rail makes sense financially and is widely supported by local communities".

Leichhardt Mayor Jamie Parker told EcoTransit News: "In the short term we want to bring together representatives of the four councils, community groups such as Friends of the GreenWay, EcoTransit and cyclist groups, the light rail service operator, RailCorp and other relevant government departments in an 'enquiry by design' process.

"This is a type of intensive hands-on



**Bob Carr's history of light rail failure exposed**

Leichhardt Mayor Jamie Parker speaking to public transport activists and inner city residents rallying for light rail outside the opening of *Shooting Through: Sydney by Tram* on 7 April. The Museum of Sydney's brilliant new exhibition on the city's historic tramway network was opened by Bob Carr, prompting EcoTransit to distributed a leaflet exposing the former premier's sorry history on light rail to invitees and passers-by. • EcoTransit's leaflet and exhibition review, PAGE 7.

planning exercise that examines design issues and options and throws up specific solutions. It will give us an accurate estimate of total project cost we can use to approach both the state and Federal governments. It's clear that local government needs to step in to do the strategy work because the state government seems to be unwilling to, or maybe incapable of, delivering what we need."

Ashfield Mayor Ted Cassidy said: "Light rail will make a significant difference to Ashfield residents and the people of Sydney as a whole. The initiative of the Inner City City Mayors Forum to develop a strategic plan is an important step to put light rail on the map in the overall transport planning context".

In Australia local government has rarely played a leading role in public transport but in Europe, Asia, Latin America and the USA, city administrations and local government associations not only advocate major initiatives but also operate them. In the US, the revival of light rail took off after the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act in 1991. It mandated an intermodal approach to highway and public transport funding with collaborative planning requirements that gave more power to city and local governments to spend money on popular non-road projects.



Light rail has been stalled at Lilyfield for nine years. Why stop there when, for less than \$50m, the service could be extended all the way to Dulwich Hill station?

**Get behind the campaign today! Information and campaign tools at [www.ecotransit.org.au](http://www.ecotransit.org.au)**

EcoTransit launched the campaign to extend light rail services to Dulwich Hill and East Balmain on 6 May 2008. At the outset we had high hopes that the NSW Government would see its way clear to authorise and fund the proposal. Why wouldn't they? It had everything going for it. It solved many problems, it was cheap, and it could be operational in the lifetime of the current parliament.

There was no risk involved. Patronage was well understood, the existing service to Lilyfield was popular, the line existed and was unused, the government owned it, it was in good condition, all that was needed was a few stops, conversion of the power to light rail voltage, some new signalling. And for the price – under \$50m – you also got a cycling and walking route and wildlife corridor. Who could resist that?

Having issued EcoTransit News as a campaign paper and got an instant and massive response from the public, we began lobbying the relevant Labor politicians.

In June we visited Canterbury MP Linda Burney and Marrickville MP Carmel Tebbutt at their offices and walked them through the proposal on the maps. Both seemed receptive, interested, and supportive. We asked particularly if they could arrange a meeting with the Premier and the Transport Minister. We met with Verity Firth, MP for Balmain and at the time, Minister for Climate Change and Environment, in July. Like Burney and Tebbutt, Firth was receptive and apparently supportive. She later spoke favourably of the proposal at a meeting of her constituents.

**Transport Minister and Deputy Premier, John Watkins**

***The idea's 'sensible', but ...***

We met with John Watkins, at that time Transport Minister and Deputy Premier, on 14 August. He was bookended by a couple of bureaucrats. Since it was obvious that he would have been well-briefed on the extension proposal we opened by updating him on the progress of the campaign, demonstrating that the proposal was essentially uncontroversial. It enjoyed widespread public acclaim, had gained the virtually unanimous support of three councils across party lines and almost every candidate in the recent local government elections had favoured it.

"All very well for them", the minister sniffed. "They don't have to take the risk. We've all done that. We've all run on something we didn't have any responsibility for".

This seemed unduly cynical and we pointed out that championing improvements to local services run by the state government had been, since time immemorial, a classic and legitimate role of local government. We proceeded to a brief exposition of the benefits of the extension, after which Watkins trotted out a series of objections.

"Won't there be a problem with voltage?"

We gently explained that the existing Variotram vehicles used by Metro Light Rail were equipped to move seamlessly from light rail's 750v to heavy rail's 1500v but that conversion of the wiring from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill to the light rail voltage was in any case a moot point because the government had unfortunately scrapped the last electric freight locomotive many years ago. All locomotives that might use the line were diesel.

The minister moved quickly to other objections. The line might be required for the removal of spoil from the Western or North-West Metro tunnels (the North-West Metro had not yet been abandoned). We pointed out to Watkins that there was nothing to stop heavy rail freight and light rail using the same line – an arrangement that was common in Europe. At the maximum rate of tunnelling that could be

# Hopes raised and dashed



Watkins, Richmond, Campbell. At the end of a long frustrating odyssey there was no valid reason light rail couldn't be extended ... it just "isn't on the agenda".

expected, only three or four spoil trains would be required each day. These could be 'time separated' so that they used the line after light rail services ceased for the night. Mr Watkins was unmoved. He'd been advised that sharing of the line was unsafe at any speed, time or configuration. (We later sent the minister a detailed statement of our position).

Watkins' concerns then moved to cost. We had made the point that at less than \$50m the six kilometre extension and completion of the GreenWay with its cycleway, walking tracks and habitat restoration, represented extraordinary value. The minister was nonplussed. How could it be so cheap? Wasn't light rail extraordinarily expensive? It was obvious he'd been systematically misinformed.

After some discussion, Watkins agreed the extension seemed sensible, but to hear him tell it, \$50 million was a truly fabulous sum of money. It wasn't in the forward estimates and would have to be budgeted for years ahead before being considered. (A few days later Nathan Rees bypassed such protocols and found a spare \$30 million to transform Olympic Park for a car race).

We concluded by suggesting the government might like to correct the unfair situation (pointed out to us by a Leichhardt Labor councillor) whereby light rail was the only privately-operated public transport in Sydney

to which the normal range of government fare concessions was not extended. This was because the Ministry of Transport (MoT) classified light rail as "luxury transport". Correcting this anomaly would cost the budget very little and signal that the government was moving in the right direction on light rail.

The Deputy Director-General of the MoT quickly suggested fare concessions wouldn't be possible because the light rail operator had signed an agreement that excluded them. The Minister nodded in assent.

We countered that the operator would be delighted if the government relented and modified the terms of the agreement. With a completely straight face, Watkins indicated that the government might perhaps consider this "When we introduce integrated ticketing". Considering the years of farce, muddle, and waste associated with the government's previous attempt at this desirable innovation, the ongoing legal imbroglio and the fact that implementation is still years away, further discussion seemed futile.

A few days later, Watkins was gone. Perhaps, at the time of our meeting, he had already clocked off, psychologically speaking. On 5 September, two days after his resignation, he was followed by Premier Morris Iemma. The Rees Government, fronted by a very different cabinet, followed.

**Infrastructure Coordinator-General, David Richmond**

***Light rail 'not for Sydney'***

We met with Professor David Richmond, the Infrastructure Coordinator-General of the Premier's Department, on 20 October and it was a strangelovian experience. Richmond is a long serving Labor courtier. Older readers will recall that he first came to notice when he headed up the 1983 inquiry into NSW mental health institutions.

It was apparent from the outset, as he listened with impatience to an outline of the proposal, that the C-G could barely disguise his hostility to us. It was all very interesting, he opined, but light rail was "not for Sydney". The future was "all metro and all underground". If we wished to go further we should find a proponent for the scheme. We explained that we rather hoped the government itself would see its way clear to be the proponent. This was the wrong thing to say. As the C-G explained it, almost an improper suggestion. Bemused, we countered that identifying problems, and opportunities for their solution, such as light rail, in this case, presented, was a widely accepted role of government.

Obviously, we were completely mistaken. The government, he explained, could only properly consider unsolicited proposals from the private sector. If we wished to take matters forward we should work through the Metro Light Rail company. The one thing we should *not* do was associate ourselves with local government to promote the extension. It was none of their business because they took no risk in such matters. We observed that the NSW government certainly seemed to be the proponent of the various metro schemes, at which the C-G became very testy and implied that we were a front for some other, unnamed, group. "We know who you've been talking to", he muttered darkly. We asked him to put names to his accusation and he backed down. We left Richmond with his helpful warning about associating with local government ringing in our ears, certain that this was precisely what we had to do.

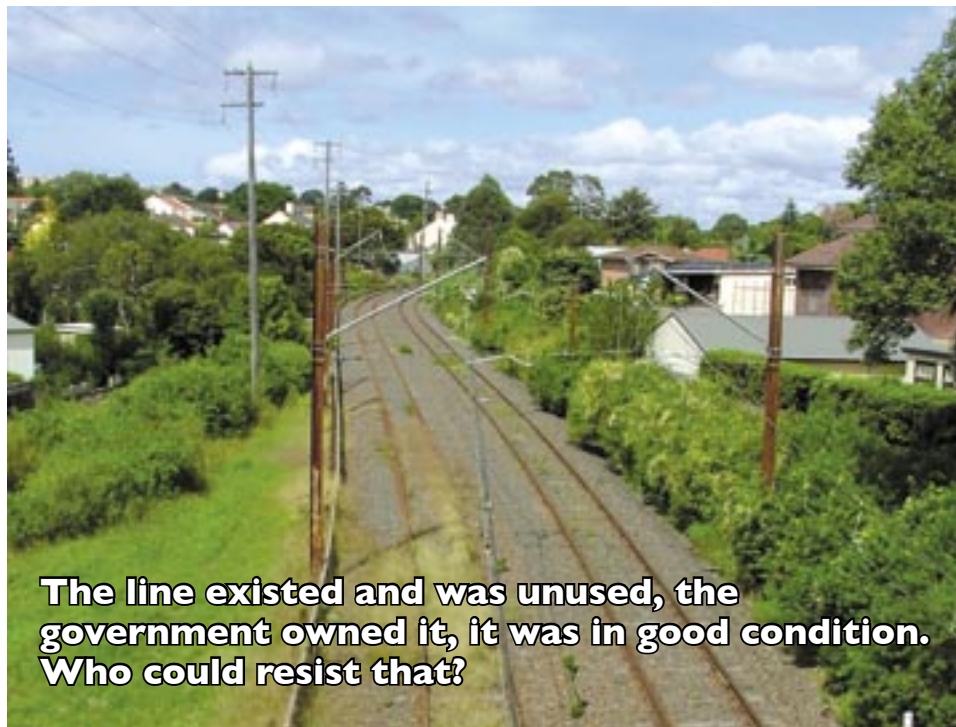
**Federal Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese**

***IA funding might be possible***

We met with Anthony Albanese, the Rudd Government Infrastructure Minister – and local member for much of the area covered by light rail and its extension proposal – at his Marrickville electorate office on 28 October.

Mr Albanese gave us a sympathetic hearing. He very properly pointed out that since he was the Infrastructure Minister and this involved his electorate, he must keep at arm's length from any decision by Infrastructure Australia to fund the proposal.

We gained the impression that the \$50 million we were seeking for the extension and GreenWay was a small ticket item and on that account wouldn't qualify for the first round



**The line existed and was unused, the government owned it, it was in good condition. Who could resist that?**



On the way to meet Transport Minister John Watkins: foreground, transport experts Dr Garry Glazebrook and Dr Michelle Zeibots with EcoTransit campaigners Leah Mason and John Bignucolo display thousands of letters from light rail supporters.

of infrastructure funding. But Infrastructure Australia was, as he spoke, setting up a Major Cities Unit that would be responsible for funding projects of our size, typically through grants to local government. He said we should consider an approach to the MCU in the new year.

### Transport Minister David Campbell

## MoT opposition ‘pathological’

We met with David Campbell, the new Transport Minister, on 10 December last year in his Governor Macquarie Tower office. He was accompanied by his senior policy advisor and proved to be more amenable than Watkins or Richmond. He was a good listener, asked intelligent questions, and dismissed out of hand Watkins’ chief objection – that light rail couldn’t proceed on the Rozelle line because it was needed for spoil removal. He had been impressed with the light rail system in Nice – one of the best in Europe – that he had seen on a private visit to France. When we raised the issue of the Ministry of Transport’s longstanding opposition to light rail he volunteered that it was indeed “pathological”.

We were much heartened by Campbell’s

attitude, and our initial impression was reinforced when, a few days later, his senior policy advisor contacted us suggesting an avenue by which we might, if we acted in the next week, obtain federal funding for an ‘enquiry by design’ process to fast-track a plan acceptable to all the stakeholders (see page 4). We were grateful for this suggestion, but unfortunately, the funds could only be applied for by local government, and the Inner West councils, entitled to only one application each, or one for each alliance of councils, had already committed to other projects.

Alas, the Ministry of Transport and his Cabinet colleagues must have reminded Campbell of his place in the world because in mid February, when asked by ABC radio what he thought of the light rail extension proposal, he went all coy.

“What I’ve got is only a certain number of hours in the day that I can approach these things and, you know, not sort of begging off the effort and the challenge, I sort of work very strongly, but there are a number of things going on at once. I just don’t have enough time in a given day to get my head around everything.”

A few weeks later Campbell told Leichhardt Mayor Jamie Parker that light rail “just isn’t on the agenda”. When asked what the councils favouring light rail might do to put it on the agenda, he replied, “Nothing”.

• Gavin Gatenby

## Analysis

# Why is the Rees Government stalling?

Despite Transport Minister David Campbell’s repudiation of his predecessor’s excuse that light rail extension couldn’t go ahead because the line would be needed for round-the-clock removal of tunnelling spoil from the proposed metro projects, the Rees government has advanced no credible rationale for further delay other than Campbell’s lame dodge that, “it’s just not on the agenda”.

While some elements of the government are undoubtedly supportive (including local MPs who recognise the proposal’s solid benefits to the electorate) there remains, lurking in the background, a subterranean current of opposition. There are two definite and one possible reason for the government’s intransigence.

### Bureaucratic opposition

The RTA is, of course, opposed to light rail because its engineers instinctively foresee that popularity and success will lead to pressure for on-road routes, not to mention the fact that any funds allocated to public transport (other than buses) is money unavailable for motorways. With a locker full of road plans that can be advanced as politically required, the RTA has a great deal of patronage to dispense to politicians.

By identifying with, and reflecting the interests of, its primary stakeholders, namely the private and public bus operators, the Ministry of Transport (MoT), has actively opposed light rail development since Sydney’s extensive tram network was scrapped in the 1950s. Whether because modern light rail has no bureaucratic constituency, or because of an ingrained, but irrational, professional bias in favour of ‘rubber on road’ solutions, the MoT acts as a powerful impediment to light rail expansion in Sydney.

The MoT’s bus fetish neatly complements the RTA’s dominant influence within government. It is worth noting that the Rozelle freight line is completely grade-separated from the road network, and would therefore require none of the road space currently used by buses. But this isn’t enough to overcome the MoT’s objections. The department opposes the Dulwich Hill extension because less crowding on the buses, better on-time running and more choice for commuters would lead to further light rail extensions.

The government’s failure to act on the light rail opportunity can mostly be sheeted home to RTA and MoT obstructionism. This myopia stands in marked contrast to transport authorities in hundreds of cities across the globe who have embraced light rail when the facts back its adoption.

For decades, the RTA has advanced its agenda by pointing to the “need” to accommodate rising traffic levels. Now, however, traffic (technically called vehicle kilometres travelled or VKT) is falling rapidly and demand for public transport is rising at an unprecedented rate. On route after route, buses are simply unable to provide the capacity needed. Of course, a government that knew its mind would sweep the obstructionists in the RTA and MoT aside, but this government does not. Why?

### In bed with the big end of town

The world-outlook of most politicians was formed in a period when oil supplies were abundant and the car was king. They have repeatedly demonstrated that they cannot really bring themselves to believe that the current crisis of declining oil availability is a reality that can only get steadily worse.

Once upon a time, both Labor and Liberal governments accepted that it was the business of government to build and run “natural monopolies” like public transport and roads but over the last 30 years politicians have been seduced by “build, own, operate, transfer” (BOOT) schemes, privatisation of existing services, and the like.

Quite apart from the ingrained bias towards motorways, the BOOT scheme era created a preference for stand-alone mega-projects because these were the most profitable avenue for the merchant banks and construction companies. Politicians like these schemes because they divested them of responsibility for anything other than setting up the deal and taking the credit. The grateful merchant banks and construction companies then feed a small proportion of their profits back into the major parties as “donations” and provided very lucrative sinecures for key ex-politicians of both major parties.



This process significantly warped the Labor Party in particular. Previously funded by the unions and working class supporters, it became hooked on donations from the big end of town as trade union and party membership declined. For this reason, the government is easily sold on multi-billion dollar underground tollways and metro rail schemes.

In this environment, light rail becomes a victim of the fact that it’s cheap to build. In the world of multi-billion dollar contracts with huge profits, projects that come in for tens of millions or even two or three hundred million dollars just don’t rate – and neither does the fact that they’d solve a hell of a lot of Sydney’s transport woes.

### And what might planning secrecy hide?

Is the rail corridor earmarked for a feeder road for the M4East proposal? Although Transport Minister Campbell has moved to keep the Rozelle freight line in RailCorp hands, this would not preclude it later being transferred to the RTA for transformation to a feeder road for the M4East. Certainly the so-called “Friends of Greater Sydney” group, spawned by a pro-motorway think-tank called the Warren Centre, has marked the Rozelle corridor as the route for “Diagonal 1”, a motorway from Balgowlah to the M5 at Bexley North. Nobody outside of Cabinet (and possibly not even there) knows what the secretive RTA boffins have in mind for the corridor. Given the strong professional and commercial links between the most active proponents within the “Friends of Greater Sydney” and the RTA, it is not unreasonable to assume that the RTA would welcome the transfer of the corridor to its jurisdiction.

# Taking the tram to Dulwich Hill

By GAVIN GATENBY, EcoTransit Sydney

We're fighting for the extension of the light rail service from its current termination at Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill station along the now disused Rozelle Goods line.

At very little cost, the LR extension would significantly boost public transport capacity in the gridlocked Inner West. We also want an integrated high-quality cycleway and pedestrian path plus native habitat restoration in the corridor, in line with the vision developed by the Friends of the GreenWay.

Sydney needs every bit of non-oil-dependent public transport infrastructure it can get and light rail extension represents an extraordinary opportunity.

The six kilometre extension from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill would add 10 light rail stops to the existing 13. A complementary extension to East Balmain would add a further four stops and much-needed extra public transport capacity for the peninsula.

The Dulwich Hill extension would establish a vital orbital link between the Western and Bankstown heavy rail lines with interchanges at Lewisham and Dulwich Hill stations, allowing new connections across CBD-bound traffic. This will radically shorten public transport trip times and make employment centres in Sydney's west more easily accessible to Inner West residents. The line would also connect with existing bus services.

The extension would utilise the existing track and wiring of the goods line. Tram stop construction and light rail compatible signaling would be required as well as two additional light rail vehicles.

The Dulwich Hill extension, including cycling and pedestrian facilities (but excluding light rail vehicles), can easily be completed for less than \$50 million – an absolute bargain by infrastructure standards. It would be a sustainable service that could be run on electricity generated from renewable sources, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The provision of a safe, fast, cycle route will encourage commuter cycling and free additional capacity on the public transport network.

We are seeking state and/or federal funding for completion of the entire project. We believe the State Government should fast-track an 'enquiry by design' consultation with local government, community groups, the light rail operator, and other stakeholders.



This is what the GreenWay could look like. The proposed Waratah tram stop at Davis Street, looking south, with tram heading towards Dulwich Hill Station. Cyclists and walkers enjoy a wide pathway with frequent rail crossing points and easy street access. The tram stop features abundant bicycle parking. Bush restoration has created a north-south migration route for native birds, mammals and reptiles.

ILLUSTRATION: GAVIN GATENBY

## Enquiry by Design

# How to craft a solution for everyone

By Dr Michelle Zeibots  
University of Technology, Sydney

The most critical next step for the light rail extensions to Dulwich Hill and Balmain Peninsula and the GreenWay corridor is the development of what planners call a physical plan. These detail what will be built where and provide guidance to engineers and designers as they turn a general concept into detailed sets of drawings ready for costing and construction.

In most cases, physical plans are developed

by government agencies in-house with only minimal consultation with the community. Once compiled, the plan is put on public display and comments are sought. The problem with this approach is that it often lacks integration and generates friction. When the aim is to combine public transport, cycleway, and pedestrian access with habitat restoration and local parking management, a lot of different government agencies need to be involved and input sought from local residents and special interest groups if the plan is to really work.

For complicated projects like the GreenWay, the best physical plans are usually developed in close consultation with the community so that special needs are incorporated in the plan right from the start. Enquiry by Design (EBD for short) has proved to be one of the best ways to do this.

In a nutshell, EBDs require technical folk from the relevant state and local government agencies to meet on-site with local residents and community representatives before starting work on detailed design options. Everyone involved works intensively for about a week on different design options and a big public discussion of the various options that have been explored is held at the end of the week.

EBDs are very different to the usual planning processes where the detailed design work happens behind closed doors and without community input. They have been used



with great success in Victoria and Western Australia.

The big advantages of EBDs is that the end results usually work better because local residents familiar with local conditions can help to sift out unworkable ideas early on in the process. EBDs enable a suite of different ideas and concepts to be crafted together in a way that reconciles the different goals sought by diverse interest groups. The result is often a dramatic reduction in the time needed to develop a solid plan that enjoys wide acceptance.

In the case of the GreenWay, it's important that the physical plan harmonises access between public transport users, cyclists, pedestrians and residents, while at the same time maximising habitat restoration and opportunities for local recreation.

## A corridor for native wildlife

In 2002, to the astonishment of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, a long-nosed bandicoot was trapped in the backyard of a house on New Canterbury Road in the suburb of Dulwich Hill. Further studies by naturalists revealed that the animal wasn't alone. Further animals have since been discovered in Lewisham, Dulwich Hill and Five Dock.

It's likely that this population, the only one known south of the Parramatta River and north of Holsworthy Army Reserve, survived the onslaught of urbanisation within the Rozelle freight corridor where it is known to be present. The "yuppie bandicoots of the inner west" are now listed as an endangered population under the Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995.

The bandicoot story illustrates the vital role of remnant greenway corridors through Sydney's most densely populated suburbs. An important aim of the GreenWay Strategy is the creation of a ribbon of wildlife-friendly native vegetation in the corridor. This specialised task – through which the dense stands of invasive



Long-nosed bandicoot

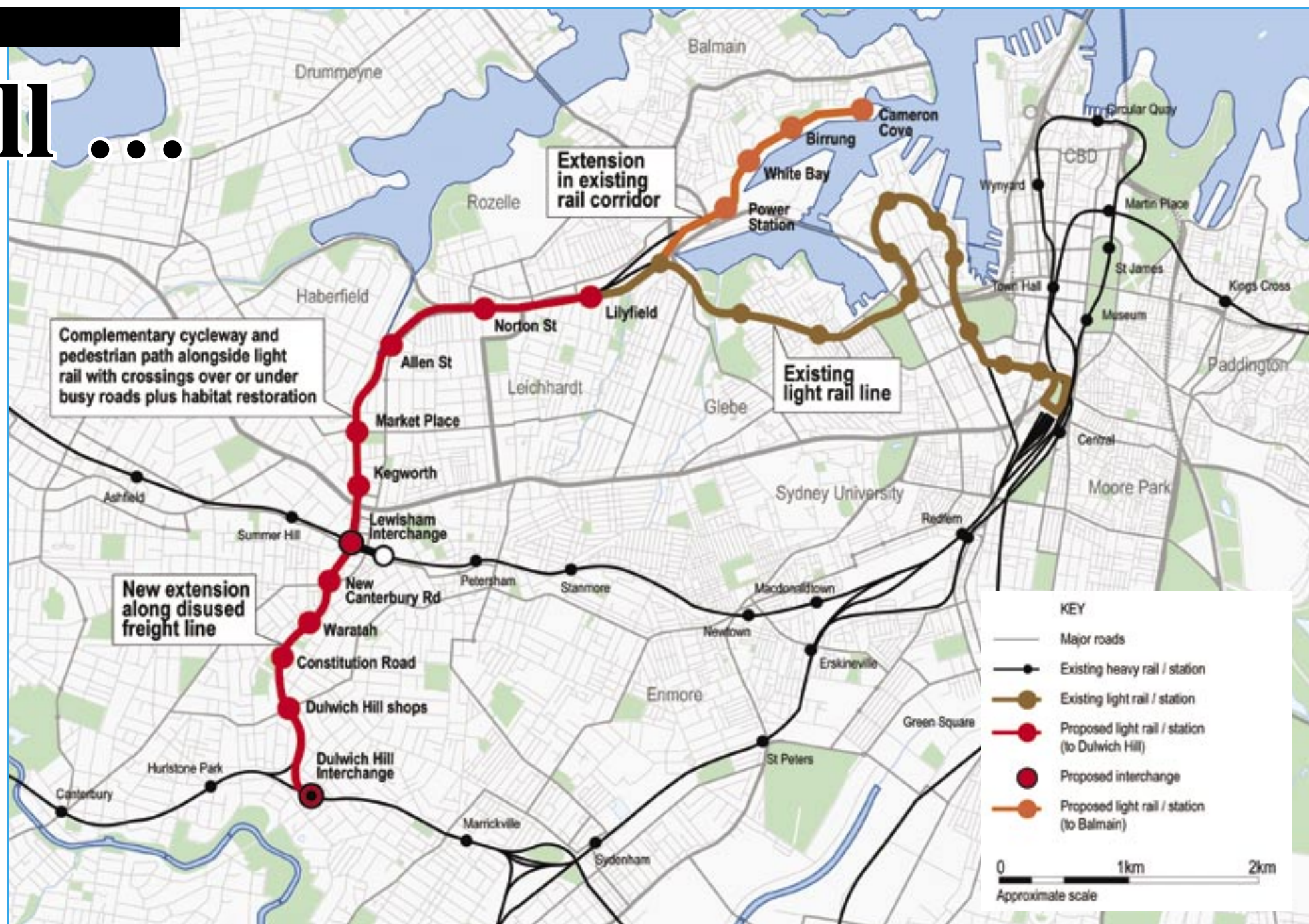
weeds that now provides at least a refuge for wildlife are gradually replaced by a superior coverage of native species – is already being undertaken by the Friends of the Greenway.

The corridor isn't just for bandicoots. Native birds such as yellow-faced honeyeaters and topknot pigeons migrate north-south through Sydney every year, in their thousands. They now depend on a few narrow green corridors with native food species like banksias and lilli pillis to help them across the barrier created by suburbia.

### EcoTransit News, May 2009

An occasional production of EcoTransit Sydney, a not-for-profit community group fighting for more and better public transport and against motorways. You can join online and download earlier editions of EcoTransit News at [www.ecotransit.org.au](http://www.ecotransit.org.au)

# Mill...



## Cross-regional mobility for the Inner West

The Rozelle freight rail line has many features that make it the obvious candidate for extending the popular light rail service to boost public transport capacity for a growing population.

The route intersects with bus services at Norton St, Marion St Leichhardt, and Parramatta Rd Lewisham. It passes between western Leichhardt and Haberfield, an area poorly served by buses, and under the main Western railway near Lewisham station. It doesn't take much imagination to see that a stop at this location could be linked by walkway or even moving footway to Lewisham station, providing an important point of interchange with the Western rail line.

The 413 bus to Campsie crosses at Old Canterbury Rd, there are more bus routes at New Canterbury Rd, and the potential terminus at Dulwich Hill is alongside the railway station, requiring only a bridge or underpass for an easy transfer to rail services to Bankstown and Liverpool. The 412 City to Campsie bus route also passes Dulwich Hill station.

That's seven points where the new line would interconnect with existing services. These connections would greatly improve cross-suburban public transport access.

From Lilyfield, likely stop locations would be Norton St / James St, Allen St and Marion St in Leichhardt, with the same stop serving Haberfield. Then Kegworth St, Longport St, Old Canterbury Rd, Davis St, Constitution Rd and New Canterbury Rd for Lewisham, Summer Hill, Abergeldie Estate and Dulwich Hill, with the terminus at Dulwich Hill Station near the end of Macarthur Pde. No doubt many users of the bus routes crossed would transfer to the trams (if a transfer ticket were available) to cut their journey time to the city.

Already, many former industrial sites once



**EASY ACCESS AND BROAD COVERAGE** This map shows the broad swath of Inner West streets within a 500m radius of the proposed tram stops. Traffic-calmed 'green streets' and bike parking at all stops will encourage cycle access to the light rail service from further afield. There are 25 schools within walking distance of the line, plus many shopping, business and recreational destinations.

served by rail freight along the line from Dulwich Hill to Ultimo have medium- to high-density housing. Others, like the old Waratah flour mill, the Mungo Scott mill at Summer Hill and adjacent industrial sites are earmarked for housing development.

In addition to the Dulwich Hill extension, light rail should also be extended from Rozelle Bay under Victoria Rd to White Bay and Cam-



**ENHANCING NETWORK OPTIONS** The Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill extension will give Inner West residents unprecedented access to the Western and Bankstown heavy rail lines with interchanges at Lewisham and Dulwich Hill. The Balmain extension will provide the White Bay cruise ship wharf with access to the city and the rail network. The Dulwich Hill extension interfaces with bus services at seven points.

erons Cove on the Balmain Peninsula. Here too, the rails are in place. As well as benefiting local residents, the dockside line is ideally placed to serve the cruise ships now docking at White Bay. The Rees Government's proposed City Metro is virtually useless for this role because it could only pick up at the edge of the cruise ship docking area.

For an estimate of construction time needed,

consider the Ultimo-Lilyfield extension. It was commenced in October 1999 and opened for service in August 2000, the work including the erection of overhead wire – already largely in place in the Lilyfield – Dulwich Hill section. So the Dulwich Hill connection could, and should, be in use within a year of a go-ahead. This is an easily affordable and achievable project with substantial public benefit vastly outweighing its cost.

# Light rail revolution spans the globe

By TONY GALLOWAY

While the Rozelle line – Sydney’s most achievable sustainable transport option – lies wasting in the long grass, the victim of political indifference and bureaucratic hostility – other cities long considered bastions of the private car, are turning to the tram.

The most recent all-new light rail system is in the American sunbelt city of Phoenix, Arizona. Linking downtown Phoenix with the suburban communities of Tempe and Mesa, the 33km, 28 station line opened in December last year. On opening day an estimated 150,000 people queued for up to an hour and a half for a ride in the comfortable new low-floor trams.

Apart from a short length of former railway the double track line is on the median of major roads, separated from motor traffic, with central platforms. In the downtown area the line splits, with inbound and outbound tracks on separate streets to conform with the one-way street system.

The surface operation is popular with passengers. Keeley Hammer, 25, told the Arizona Republic newspaper, “It seems pretty easy. I’ve been on the Washington DC subway and this is much more user-friendly.”

An average 26,000 riders per day are anticipated, with a maximum capacity of 12,000 per hour. The immediate popularity of the line has led to lobbying for extensions to other parts of Phoenix and the line’s initial ridership estimates are expected to be exceeded.

Other western and southwestern American cities, previously wedded to the car and the freeway, from Denver in the Rockies and Salt Lake City in Utah, to Dallas and Houston in Texas, have embraced light rail as the affordable high-quality transport mode, bringing new life back to city centres that had declined as businesses moved to suburban malls.

Car dependence caused by a decline in public transport led to many American cities “doughnutting”. Their old centres decayed and an ugly ring of suburban malls and parking lot developments replaced traditional pedestrian-friendly street-based town centres. Now, with light rail providing car-free access, the town centres and city CBDs are being revived with quality public transport where people want it – on the surface, running to where they want to go.

On the American west coast, Sacramento, San Jose, Santa Clara, Los Angeles and San Diego started building new light rail in the 1980s. Seattle and Portland have now joined the light rail revolution. San Francisco never scrapped its trams entirely, and along with electric trolley buses and the historic cable cars, maintained good public transport through the lean years. It’s now expanding and modernising its system from a strong base, vindicating the decision, fifty years ago, to buck the trend and preserving the unique character of the city.

In Europe, the success story of the new Paris tramways continues with the announcement of a 14.5 km extension to line T3, adding 26 more stops, interchanging with 11 metro and two suburban rail heavy lines. Four separate new tramway routes have been built in the French capital since 1992, two of them on median strips of major



A 33 kilometre line in Phoenix, Arizona, opened in December 2008, is the latest all-new US light rail system. Photo: Peter Ehrlich.



Since 1992, Paris has added four new tramways to its public transport system, providing metro-quality service, on the surface, at lower cost. Photo: Christoph Groneck

roads, two on disused railways. These new lines are part of the general revival of electric tramways in France since 1985. Like most of Australia, France discarded trams after World War 2. From only three surviving tramways there are now more than twenty new systems operating or under construction.

In Paris, trams disappeared in 1938 as the famously extensive metro system was built, but in recent years the cost of metro construction has become prohibitive. The new tramways have demonstrated that metro-quality service can be provided on the surface, at much lower cost and in much shorter time frames than would be possible with underground construction.

The return of tramways to French cities came after a few had built automated metro systems of the sort proposed for Sydney. This technology was principally developed in France and was tried in a number of cities

with limited success, due to high costs, long construction times and the intrusive elevated structures needed for the systems where they are above ground.

Like other “innovative” systems – guided buses, monorails and rubber tyred trains – proprietary automated metro systems are non-solutions to non-existent problems: more expensive and less reliable than the well proven, generic technology of electric light railway. The electric rail car was developed into a reliable, efficient vehicle in the 1880s, has had well over a century of refinement since, and works very well. Once unique proprietary systems are no longer of interest to their makers, expensive custom parts must be made or the system replaced. In Japan, a number of monorails built in the seventies have been closed down as running costs and one-off replacement rolling stock became prohibitively expensive. It’s much better to have two rails and an overhead wire

compatible with any electric light rail vehicle.

In Britain, light rail has been used in Birmingham, Manchester and London to revitalise old railways and extend rail service through town and city centres on the surface, making the expensive tunnelling or intrusive overhead structures unnecessary.

London’s Underground is mostly north of the Thames. South of the river, centred on Croydon, a 30km light rail network, using railway lines and newly constructed track opened in 2000. Croydon Tramlink has boosted public transport usage and reduced car dependency by improving connectivity between heavy rail and bus services, and providing trackside cycleways.

Rather than dividing neighborhoods with high fences, the former railway lines now form open green links with pathways and frequent pedestrian crossings. Near-silent modern trams operate safely and unobtrusively, replacing a large number of diesel buses, reducing car dependency and improving local air quality.

Croydon Tramlink’s success has persuaded London mayor Boris Johnson to reverse his opposition to expanding the system, and led to similar proposals in other parts of the city not well served by the Underground. Croydon Tramlink has returned high quality transport to a region that lost its original trams almost sixty years ago, was never going to have underground metro service due to construction cost, and was poorly served by the old and worn out suburban trains that the trams replaced.

Sheffield and Nottingham both have new light rail systems that operate on streets and former railways, and Edinburgh has a new tramway under construction. Across the Irish Sea Dublin’s popular LUAS light rail operation is being expanded to keep up with demand.

With light rail construction has come the pedestrianisation of town centres, the exclusion of cars, and the revitalisation of shopping precincts previously choked with traffic or bypassed for big malls with big parking lots outside the towns.

The new tramways were intended to alleviate the blight of excessive car dependency and have succeeded spectacularly in societies that all the naysayers insisted were “wedded” to their vehicles. With world shortages of energy and global warming, the future will require a light touch approach to solving the mobility and energy problems that confront us. Light rail is the way to go.

## Light rail images and information on the web

**Trams in France** [www.trams-in-france.net](http://www.trams-in-france.net)

Information on systems in operation, under construction, or proposed in 26 French towns and cities. Excellent images by Peter Groneck.

**New York City Subway.org** <http://world.nycsubway.org>

Information and excellent images on systems in the US, Europe, Canada, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East.

**Light Rail Now!** <http://www.lightrailnow.org/index.htm>

News and information mostly about US systems and transit politics.

**Nick Possum Home Page** [www.brushtail.com.au](http://www.brushtail.com.au)

Go to Nick Possum’s Old Sydney Town for images of Sydney trams in the early years of last century.

**EcoTransit Sydney** [www.ecotransit.org.au](http://www.ecotransit.org.au)

Go to: *Resources – Letters of Transit* for two fascinating contemporary papers from 1933 and 1934 covering aspects of Sydney tramway operations.

# Bob Carr made sure trams are still just history

In March 1995 Bob Carr was elected premier of NSW. Ten years later he was gone, bolting to the bank his government served so well, leaving a legacy of failed policies and public amenity and infrastructure in decay.

That Bob Carr has the temerity to open an exhibition of the history of Sydney's tramways is emblematic. The emptiness of his promises to extend the benefits of modern light rail to more than a tiny area of the Inner West has meant that trams are still just a memory, not the vital part of the city's infrastructure they should be.

In the late 1980s, after years of lobbying for a light rail system, one came close to being taken seriously when a link between the CBD and Darling Harbour was considered in conjunction with the Darling Harbour redevelopment. Unfortunately, the State Labor Government chose the Monorail instead. It soon became apparent that the monorail was not a viable mass transit system, putting light rail back on the agenda.

The present light rail line had its beginnings in 1992 when the Federal Labor Government introduced the Building Better Cities program to encourage new approaches to urban development. The Fahey State Liberal Government of the time provided practical support for the light rail project, while most funding was provided by the Federal Government and the private sector.

In 1996, the Carr Government appointed a Public Transport Advisory Council whose tasks included investigating light rail options. The council produced numerous recommendations for additional lines, but the government acted on none of them.

Finally, in 1997, the government commissioned an environmental impact statement for an extension of the line from Central to Circular Quay and from Wentworth Park to Lilyfield. But the plans for these had been developed under the Fahey Liberal government. The EIS came out strongly in favour of the extensions but only the Lilyfield extension went ahead. The CBD extension was 'deferred' until after completion of the Cross-City Tunnel. It never went ahead and in 2006 the plan was quietly dropped by the Iemma Government.

The Central-Wentworth Park section of the present line opened on 31 August 1997. The extension along the former goods line to Lilyfield commenced operations in August 2000.

In the nine years since, the Carr, Iemma and Rees governments have failed to extend light rail, despite the success of the Lilyfield line which now carries almost 4 million passengers a year.

Over the last year the line has had 9 per cent growth in ridership and is the only public transport in Sydney without government subsidy – a fact which speaks for itself.

Rather than extend the popular service to Dulwich Hill, Rozelle and Balmain, the government instead embarks on mad schemes of unwanted and unnecessary motorways and metro rail fantasies that go nowhere and serve no-one while wasting money and disrupting lives. What are they thinking?

Fifty years after the trams commemorated in the Museum of

## Classic doublespeak from the master of spin ...

**'The Chatswood-Parramatta rail link, the Olympic rail link, the airport rail line and the Sydney Light Rail and its planned extensions are all examples of public transport reversing car-friendly development.'**

24 March 2000

At a Premier's Forum on improving urban design. Since then we've had nothing but more sprawl, cancelled public transport schemes and more tollroads. Is that reversing car-friendly development?

**'I think the revival of light rail will be one of the great themes of living in Sydney over the next few decades.'**

13 August 2000

At the opening of the Metro Light Rail extension to Lilyfield, which was expected to be followed by the CBD extension and routes to other inner suburbs. Nothing more happened.

Sydney exhibition were unfortunately being consigned to history, the NSW government shows yet again it has learned and understood nothing. And Bob Carr, the hollow man, whose green transport promises were as brown

and empty as a dried out gourd, is an ironically appropriate symbol of the failures of transport policy then and now.

• This article was distributed as a leaflet at the opening of *Shooting Through – Sydney by Tram* on 7 April.



## Review

# Sydney's world-class tram network was trashed to please the car lobby

• *Shooting Through – Sydney by Tram.* Museum of Sydney, cnr Bridge & Phillip Streets, Sydney. Open daily 9.30am – 5pm until 18 October. T 9251 5988, [www.hht.net.au](http://www.hht.net.au).

This is an excellent and timely exhibition. Organised by the Historic Houses Trust, it features a wonderful collection of tramway artefacts and images from the Sydney Tramway Museum and the memories of former tramways staff and travellers.

Half a century ago, our tramway system was bigger than Melbourne's much-admired network – now the world's biggest. The Sydney system was then the second-largest in the British Empire, behind only Central London. Sydney's first tram ran in 1861 and the last in 1961. At its height in 1945, the system carried 400 million passengers annually.

Opening the exhibition, former premier Bob Carr, now a Macquarie Bank 'consultant', studiously avoided the issue of light rail's return to Sydney and rambled on about "nostalgia in bucketloads" and "a trip down memory lane". He spun this theme at such length that it became obvious he was avoiding his own sorry record on light rail.

Carr sold the exhibition very short indeed. For the oldies it will indeed be a nostalgia-fest, but for generations who never knew the Sydney system, it will be a revelation.

*Shooting Through* features many excellent photographs documenting the trams, tramlines, terminuses, workshops, staff of the system and, of course, its passengers. There are posters, signs, conductors' paraphernalia and model trams. The system's record in the visual arts is represented by some fine etchings, linocuts and paintings. There's also an informative video featuring archival footage, reminiscences of tramway staff, insight from historians, and a plug by Clover Moore for the extension of the current system.

If the Sydney system had survived, our city would have avoided most of the problems of traffic gridlock and air pollution that became



Pitt Street, December 1935. An N class tram bound for Erskineville leads a procession of trams through Christmas shoppers. One of the evocative photos from *Shooting Through – Sydney by Tram* (HH Fishwick for Sydney Morning Herald courtesy Fairfaxphotos).

apparent within 20 years of its demise and we would now be enviably placed to withstand the onslaught of peak oil. Unfortunately, the whole system was removed to please the car lobby. The buses that replaced the trams were less convenient and had a much lower carrying capacity. Public transport use immediately declined.

Melbourne kept its trams. This was partly because, while Sydney's network had been allowed to run down over many years, far-sighted Victorian bureaucrats resisted the pressure to trash their network in favour of buses. Melbourne had reinvested during the 1940s, and in the early 1950s the destruction of the system simply couldn't be financially justified. While NSW's Department of Main Roads was frantically ripping out the tram tracks, Melbourne continued to lay them.

South of the border they've never regretted

that decision and the world has come around to their viewpoint with dozens more cities and large towns in Europe, Asia and the Americas turning back to light rail. There are currently 400 systems in operation and a further 60 under construction.

If you were too young to have known the Sydney trams, you'll find this exhibition is a fascinating introduction to the world-class light rail system we lost.

A nicely presented hard-cover souvenir book (\$24.95), model trams for kids and other memorabilia are available from the museum shop. • **Gavin Gatenby**

• **Ride real historic trams at the Sydney Tramway Museum**

Princes Highway, Sutherland, open Wed, 10am – 3pm, Sun 10am – 5pm. Adjacent to Loftus railway station. T 9542 3646, [www.sydneysteamwaymuseum.com.au](http://www.sydneysteamwaymuseum.com.au)

# Do your bit for the light rail campaign

## Send another message to the Premier!

If you signed one of our form letters before, this letter is different, so you can sign again. Send it to EcoTransit and we'll deliver it to the Premier.

Sign this and post to:  
EcoTransit Sydney  
PO Box 630  
Milsons Point NSW 1565

## And then ... you can do more!

Join our electronic campaign and send an e-card to politicians. Follow the links at:

[www.ecotransit.org.au](http://www.ecotransit.org.au)

Politicians notice **personal letters**, so your reasons for supporting the light rail extension, expressed in your own words, will make a difference. **To assist our campaign, please email a copy of your letter to us at:**

[lightrail@ecotransit.org.au](mailto:lightrail@ecotransit.org.au)

### Who to write to:

The Premier  
The Hon. Nathan Rees, MP  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Or email:

[thepremier@www.nsw.gov.au](mailto:thepremier@www.nsw.gov.au)

### and also...

The Hon. Anthony Albanese, MP  
Minister for Infrastructure & Transport  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Or email:

[A.Albanese.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:A.Albanese.MP@aph.gov.au)

### Volunteer to help the light rail campaign

Street stalls and letterboxing are an integral part of any good community campaign. EcoTransit needs your help to keep the community informed of events as the campaign gains momentum.

### Become a member of EcoTransit Sydney

Becoming a member of EcoTransit Sydney enables you to meet like-minded community members and contribute ideas to our campaigns. Simply join online at

[www.ecotransit.org.au](http://www.ecotransit.org.au)

Don't delay, do it today.  
And pass this on to a friend or neighbour!



## Sustainable transport for Sydney

The Premier  
The Hon. Nathan Rees, MP  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000



Dear Premier,

### Light Rail extension to Dulwich Hill and East Balmain

I wish to express my strong support for extension of the current light rail service from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill, using the disused Rozelle freight rail line, with complementary infrastructure for cyclists and walkers along the GreenWay corridor. I also believe the light rail service should be extended to East Balmain using the existing freight line.

I am concerned that, despite a groundswell of public support and the backing of local government, the obvious merits of these proposed extensions have not so far been given due consideration by your government. Residents of the densely populated Inner West have had to cope with increasingly overcrowded bus services operating well above capacity during peak periods and high levels of car traffic on roads that were not designed for today's traffic volumes. At very little cost the extensions will greatly boost public transport capacity and provide much-needed relief to congested roads and bus services.

The Dulwich Hill extension will create a crucial rail-based cross-city service through the Inner West, linking Glebe, Annandale and Rozelle with Leichhardt, Haberfield, Summer Hill, Lewisham, Dulwich Hill, and the CBD. For commuters travelling to important Western Sydney centres such as Liverpool and Parramatta, it will provide handy connections to the CityRail network at Lewisham and Dulwich Hill stations. A White Bay extension would serve both the wharves and the Balmain Peninsula.

For these reasons, I believe the government should fast-track a design consultation with councils, community groups, the light rail operator, RailCorp and other relevant government authorities, to finalise design details for the light rail extensions within a GreenWay corridor.

Please reply to advise me that you will proceed with these projects immediately.

Yours sincerely,

SIGNATURE

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

DATE

Post to: EcoTransit, PO Box 630, Milsons Point NSW 1565 and we'll deliver it to the Premier. Please make copies for friends and neighbours to send!

