

Committee for North Sydney

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**Sydney Metro
City and Southwest Project Communications
Crows Nest Early Engagement**
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Crows Nest Integrated Station Development

Transport for NSW is inappropriately using short-cuts and the SSD approval processes for buildings that are effectively private commercial developments. The agencies of Transport for NSW, including Sydney Metro, have responsibilities and accountabilities for all aspects of their activities and impacts, and cannot claim that a simplistic version of value capture, and commercial-in-confidence restrictions, protect them from normal public scrutiny.

Nor can Transport for NSW claim that their developments would, in normal circumstances, comply with local planning requirements and receive the local council's approval. It is obvious that the buildings over Crows Nest and Victoria Cross stations would not be approved by the North Sydney Council, not just because of specific standards but because of many wider principles to protect and improve the respective centres.

If the new Metro is effective in adding to transit options and increasing mobility, it will be widely supported. The presently proposed over station developments, however, are more likely to be condemned by the North Sydney community. If built in anything like their present form – and if cynically rushed through the approval processes as intended – they will be increasingly seen as making the two centres worse rather than better, and as too high a price to pay for an otherwise positive project.

The Committee for North Sydney strongly supports the propositions and proposals included in the submissions made by the Wollstonecraft and Waverton Precinct Committees.

The Committee for North Sydney strongly supports the call by the North Sydney Council for a halt in Sydney Metro's planning and tendering processes, to allow for genuine community consultation around revised design options.

In addition, the Committee for North Sydney raises the following objections.

The Committee for North Sydney objects to Sydney Metro's truncated consultation and approval processes. They will generate anger, not agreement.

If a government agency cannot involve the community in an open, transparent and orderly manner, how can any urban development be done well? Transport for NSW, and Sydney Metro in particular, must show how the over station development reinforces and contributes to community, Council and GSC plans and principles, rather than undermining them.

This can only be done, for Crows Nest and for the North Sydney city centre, if Sydney Metro recognises current decisions must be provisional – in particular, decisions relating to the tendering process at Victoria Cross – and must wait until the wider implications and impacts have been publicly identified and resolved.

The Committee for North Sydney objects to the use of the SSD process to avoid normal and proper planning assessment for the commercial buildings being built on land now owned by the State. It will increasingly be seen as a failure of government.

The airy, inaccurate and misleading statements and renderings being used by Sydney Metro are no substitute for the normal, independent, professional assessment of proposals. Over time, this approach will be seen more and more clearly to involve conflicts of interest and avoidance of accountability.

The Government has just established an investigation into the corruption of planning approval processes and ‘decision-making governance’. It is inevitable that the community will ask similar questions about Sydney Metro’s use of confidentiality and premature tenders to circumvent independent assessment.

The Committee for North Sydney objects to the apparent absence of any attempt by Sydney Metro to leave a legacy of improvement in Crows Nest and the North Sydney city centre.

The agencies of Transport for NSW, including Sydney Metro, have responsibilities that go well beyond simply engineering the infrastructure. They have responsibilities to *create value*, not just to *capture value*.

Starkly, in Crows Nest and the North Sydney city centre, there is so far no indication – other than implausible marketing exaggeration – that any thought has been given to making these centres better.

Transport for NSW, and Sydney Metro in particular, must show how the building of a Metro station in these centres adds to public facilities, community life, social opportunities, environmental sustainability and long term strategic objectives. It is incredible that such a major public project has so far ignored these obligations.

The Committee for North Sydney objects to the absence of community involvement even in the Metro project itself.

Reliable local and international experience shows that high levels of community and passenger satisfaction with public transport systems is only achieved through consultation and open planning. We urge the NSW Government to implement proper processes for planning metro services, and to apply those fundamental principles to the planning of the over station development at Crows Nest and Victoria Cross.

The [Committee for North Sydney](#) is ready to cooperate with Sydney Metro, Transport for NSW, the Department of Planning and Environment, North Sydney Council, Precinct Committees, property developers and other stakeholders on maximising the wider public benefits, and minimising the negative impacts, of over station developments at the Crows Nest and Victoria Cross stations. *Only through committed openness and collaboration* will the ‘transformations’ of the Metro come to be seen as landmarks of successful planning and delivery.

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Jeremy Dawkins, Convenor of the Committee for North Sydney