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MOOREBANK INTERMODAL

My name is Wayne Prior and I am representing my family and myself here today. I thank the PAC for this opportunity.

I want to talk mainly about 3 things –

1. Some pertinent matters relating to the Assessment Report Recommendations and Planning issues generally
2. The people of Wattle Grove in particular, but all surrounding residents, have had a raw deal, and deserve a fair go; and
3. Transparency – the consequences of a lack of it in early stages and the importance now of complete transparency.

We live in [REDACTED] 800 metres west of the Southern Sydney Rail Freight Line, and a kilometre from the proposed intermodal site.

The noise from suburban passenger rail services on either the South Line or the East Hills Line is not audible at our house. However the same cannot be said of freight rail services on the Southern Sydney Freight Line and we are sometimes woken up at night by them. It can only get much worse for us when there is increased rail freight traffic on that line because of this project. There is a need for highly effective acoustic barriers along the railway and for that matter right around the site.

The nature and scale of this project is such that we will be badly impacted by it in various ways. We will experience noise intrusion 24/7 at a level we have never known at our house, and it will be much worse than the occasional freight train passing in the night that we experience at present. Air quality will be badly affected (my wife is asthmatic) because of the hugely increased road traffic and rail volume, and the road network will be congested and dangerous because of the huge number of heavy trucks.

No expense should be spared in solving the challenges of a safe and convenient local road network.

The Georges River riparian zone, already badly trashed further downstream will be under even greater threat no matter how carefully drafted is the Planning recommendations. Therefore the Moorebank and Casula Biodiversity Offset Areas should be more generously sized I believe to provide a greater contingency factor in the riparian zone. We have never learned how to properly respect this river have we?

Let's make absolutely certain we get it right this time.

But all of the designated bio diversity Offset Areas in the developers' proposal should be more generously sized so that they are therefore more effective as buffer zones. The Wattle Grove Offset Area should be wider as a gesture of genuine concern for the closest residents. If it was wider it would be a welcome concession by the developers in demonstrating a willingness to do more to address concerns about noise, light and visual pollution that will affect nearby residents. And all 3 of

these Offset Areas should forever be precluded from development. We know about 'developer creep' and how ways are often found to vary planning approvals later.

I have not come here today only to discuss specific Planning matters. I am here also because I felt that I had to speak knowing as much as I do about the history of Wattle Grove and Holsworthy. In that context I share the anger and frustration felt by many people from those areas.

The people who bought residential property in Wattle Grove, Holsworthy and South Holsworthy in the 1990's and 2000's have the most to lose. And I think the lack of transparency around this proposal over many years by Government has betrayed and deceived them.

Why such an extraordinary lack of transparency over such a long period? And look at the consequences of this....it is not surprising that the community is frustrated and angry.

What do I mean by saying the people 'might have been deceived or betrayed'? Let me explain by giving you some background.

I was the Manager of the [REDACTED] at Moorebank from 1991 to 1998. The DHA was and still is a Commonwealth Government instrumentality.

DHA acquired ownership of the entire suburb of Holsworthy in 1990/91 and also took over from Defence the ownership of the lands where the suburbs of Wattle Grove and South Holsworthy are located. Thus they owned all of the planned residential property closest to the intermodal site.

Wattle Grove quickly became the most sought after place to live in Liverpool LGA. Part of the appeal for buyers lay in the fact that Wattle Grove was adjacent to the Holsworthy barracks and the Moorebank Logistic Group which was on Moorebank Avenue because these areas were viewed as a buffer from the urban and industrial environments further away.

In total about 4000 residential lots were developed or redeveloped in those areas by the DHA/Delfin Joint Venture. About 4,000 families moved into this area in the 90's. They were comfortable and relaxed in a very well planned urban setting.

No one within DHA or Delfin had any idea that the Moorebank Intermodal was likely. Had they known, it would have caused some serious rethinking about the layout of the western most portions of the Wattle Grove sub division.

And in the interests of nearby residents or potential buyers DHA almost certainly would have felt obliged to prevail on the Commonwealth to ensure that there would be constraints on the nature and scale of new development along Moorebank Avenue which was close to housing. It is my view that the Commonwealth has always had an obligation to do this. To not do it is a betrayal of the trust of Wattle Grove residents.

Like local residents I think the military too must also have been comfortable with how they saw the future. In the mid 1990's they redeveloped the School of Military Engineering on Moorebank Avenue, and across the road they built the 'Defence National Storage and Distribution Centre'. Both projects came at a large cost to Government. Evidently the military believed that both of these facilities would stay in situ on Moorebank Avenue for many years.

In 1996, which was 5 years into the life of the joint ventures, John Howard became Prime Minister and Danna Vale became the Member for Hughes. John Sharpe was the Minister for Transport and Regional Development in 1996 and 1997. Danna Vale was the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence for 2 years from November 2001.

As the Minister for Transport and Regional Development in 1996-1997, Sharpe came to Holsworthy and did an aerial inspection of all of the defence lands. Holsworthy was being suggested as the site for Sydney's 2nd airport. However he showed interest in all of the Defence lands, not just the portion that might be used for an airport. Why was he so interested in the other areas? I thought this was curious.

Then around late 1997, shortly after Sharpe's visit there was a rumour of a long term strategy for the Defence lands along Moorebank Avenue. According to this they were to be used for a privately owned industrial activity such as a Technology Park.

At the time it was inconceivable that the DNSDC and SME sites would be included because—

- a) In relation to DNSDC it could have implications for people in Wattle Grove and it might be perceived by residents that there had been a breach of good faith by the Commonwealth. I didn't think the Commonwealth would want that;
- b) If true, the Commonwealth might be conflicted and I didn't think that was a risk the Commonwealth would take; and
- c) It would be at odds with the Commonwealth's recent expensive upgrading of SME and the building of the DNSDC.

Therefore I was convinced that whatever happened along Moorebank Avenue it would be constrained as to not adversely affect in a substantial way the people of Wattle Grove.

So it's possible that even while the residential developments or redevelopments were still underway or just after completion a strategy for large scale commercially operated industrial development on Moorebank Avenue was being considered by Government.

I would like to see the complete history of this project within Government made public. This should go right back to 1997. We should know who first proposed major development on Moorebank Avenue adjacent to Wattle Grove, who lobbied whom, who knew what, when did they know it, what decisions were made, when were they made, and by whom, and what considerations were given to the interests of the people of Wattle Grove?

The question is - did the Commonwealth fail in negotiating this development to ensure that there were protections in place to prevent such a monstrously large development happening so close to Wattle Grove? We should know the truth. We were kept in the dark for too long. We should have complete transparency.

Finally, 4,000 families in this immediate area invested heavily by buying land and building houses where the Commonwealth was a co-venturer in the land development. It's the greatest single investment many of them will ever make. All of this was done long before the Intermodal came into prospect. But it now threatens their lifestyle, their land values, their health, and well being, their

very quality of life. They have a moral right to have their concerns taken very seriously. They have had a raw deal, and they deserve a fair go.

So in conclusion I recommend –

1. That the concerns of local residents, and especially those from Wattle Grove are taken very seriously. They deserve a fair go;
2. That the most effective acoustic barriers possible be constructed to limit rail, traffic and other noise from all local residents whether they are in Wattle Grove or Casula or elsewhere;
3. That all 3 Bio – diversity Offset Areas should be larger and guaranteed to be permanent so that they cannot be reduced in size or developed later;
4. That no expense be spared in ensuring a safe and convenient local road network;
5. That the complete history of this project within Government should be made public; and
6. That there must not again be a lack of transparency in the process.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Wayne Prior

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