



43 Belgrave St, Manly NSW 2095

The Hon David Elliott MP
Transport Minister
52 Martin Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Elliott,

My name is Joeline Hackman and I'm standing as the Independent for Manly in the upcoming state elections.

I am writing to you as a matter of utmost urgency regarding **public transport services on the Northern Beaches**.

I know you are leaving politics at the end of next month and I wish you well for your future but I very much hope you will help us before you retire.

As you know, with only two roads leading in and out of the "Insular Peninsular" a reliable public transport service is essential to get commuters into the city for work. We also depend on it to get kids to school and everyone to a variety of activities. Without it, our roads would come to a standstill.

Before privatisation, although not perfect, our public transport worked well. Those in outlying "hubs" or villages such as Clontarf, Seaforth or Balgowlah could catch a bus that took them all the way to the city without changes. It may not have been as frequent as they liked or as fast but they could jump on, open their laptop or newspaper, and relax.

The new spoke and hub system that delivers them to the B-line is proving a disaster.

The shortage of drivers means that many buses are cancelled, long queues for the B-line mean commuters often wait 30 minutes or longer before being able to board a bus, connections are missed and I hear frequent reports of people being late for school or work and giving up in despair and getting in their car.

Adding to the chaos, buses often abandon their timetables completely. When this isn't reflected in the transport apps, bewildered commuters are subject to even more stress. Several have told of waiting for an hour for a bus that never turned up before setting off on a long walk – in heat or rain – in the hope that another bus route may deliver them to their destination.

One member of my electorate told me his daughter attempted to catch 13 different buses before finally making it to her after-school dance class. Parents are being forced to abandon work and collect their children and drive them to school.

Everyone suffers, Mr Elliott – commuters who can't get to work, businesses that can't operate because their staff haven't arrived, vulnerable users who can't make essential

appointments, pupils who miss lessons, car drivers who are forced to sit in every increasing traffic jams... something needs to change.

I know we are not alone in our concern. The NSW Legislative Committee has proclaimed bus privatisation to be an “absolute disaster” for this city, citing worse services, longer travel times, regular cancellations, confusing timetable changes and worse pay and conditions for bus drivers.

However, the Northern Beaches situation is particularly dire because, not only have our bus services been privatised, our ferry services have also been adversely impacted by privatisation and the introduction of new ferries which are clearly not fit for purpose.

The Freshwater ferry fleet was slower than the new Emerald class but, again, reliable and sturdy. The passenger capacity was 1100 so it could easily cope with the huge number of summer visitors and loading and unloading was swift as it could be done on upper and lower decks with wide gangplanks allowing passengers to walk four or five abreast.

Problems with the Emerald class ferries include:

- They can only carry 375 passengers so on busy weekends, the queues stretch out of the ferry terminal and down the street. This impacts passenger sentiment and local businesses.
- A single gangplank, on one deck only, results in disembarkation-boarding times of up to 15 minutes.
- More than 80 defects have been found including cracks in hulls, steering problems, windows shattering, an engine explosion and problems operating safely in high swells or dock at very low tides. This means the ferries are regularly withdrawn from service.

I know you have received a petition with more than 50,000 signatures from worried commuters and conducted a safety review.

Could you please:

1. Let us know the results of your safety review. It was due to be completed by December last year.
2. Share details of the service contracts with TransDev and Kelois Downer. Their promises of high standards of customer experience and operations and an efficient reliable transport system have been so broken, we need to know what was put in place so we can provide feedback and define exactly what’s gone wrong and improve our services.
3. Confirm there are currently no contractual safeguards to protect local and less patronised bus routes and that bus drivers doing the same jobs are on different, less attractive contracts. .
4. Confirm there is currently no system for commuter feedback.
5. Confirm whether the Coalition has accepted the recommendations of the NSW Legislative Committee and will end the contracts of private operators as soon as legally possible if they don’t improve to provide the required service.

With regards

Joeline Hackman
Independent Candidate for Manly