

## **Rigorous evaluation of Stage 2 Light Rail needed**

The Government needs to provide evidence that Stage 2 of the Light Rail represents value for money and provide better environmental benefits than other options. The Auditor-General's Report on Light Rail Stage 2A, released on 24 September, has raised considerable concern in the Canberra community. This Report casts serious doubts about the thoroughness and credibility of the economic analysis underpinning the 2019 Business Case for Stage 2A. The Auditor-General has recommended that it be revised, updated and made publicly available for scrutiny.

An ACT Government spokesman was quoted (Canberra Times 25 September) as saying: "The report focuses on Stage 2A of light rail. Whilst the Stage 2A extension provides some benefits, the ACT Government's intention is to maximise the benefits for the city in extending the line from Gungahlin to Woden." We interpret that statement as conceding that the economics of Stage 2A do not stack up, but that the rest of it will be worth the pain and the huge expense, to which we say: Show us the evidence!

We call on the ACT Government to sign no new contracts on Stage 2 until the whole Stage 2 project is subjected to comprehensive and robust economic and environmental impact analysis, including thoroughly assessing feasible alternatives, before committing this large investment.

Canberra citizens are entitled to know all costs of the project including the costs of significant disruption and impacts of the construction phase, as well as the likely proposed reduction in the service levels of public transport along the route. We also want to know how much Canberra rates will have to be increased to pay for Light Rail.

All of this information then needs to be made public in order for the Canberra public to have the opportunity to make a well-informed judgement on Light Rail Stage 2. The Government needs to demonstrate that it represents good value for money in the short and long term, and whether or not it will provide significant environmental benefits.

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