

# Dulwich Hill

STORIES

Text and Images by Chris Walters



*The Sydney Station Stories article series looks at active railway stations around the Sydney region – their history, placement, design, precincts and current services.*

I'm going to approach this 'episode' a little differently, in that I'm going to plan a 'sequel'. This is because, at the time of writing, Dulwich Hill Station is one thing, but in a year's time – on the far side of the conversion and recommissioning of the Sydenham-Bankstown line as part of the Sydney Metro network – it will be a rather different thing. Therefore, check back in 18 months or so when we take a look at one of Dulwich Hill's neighbouring stations, to see how much has changed. In the meantime, Dulwich Hill, as it is now, is an intermediate station on what is, for the moment, the Sydney Trains T3 Bankstown Line, but unlike its sister 'Banko' stations, Dulwich Hill has the added benefit of a direct link to the L1 Inner West Light Rail line. But it is probably for the best that we pause in our gaze at current state and roll back the clock to the start of the story.

The Bankstown Line was one of the earliest branch lines on the early Sydney railway network and was conceived as an alternate route for traffic bound for the Main Southern Railway, with the original intent being that it would link-up to Liverpool – which of course, it would eventually. The branch opened between Sydenham and Belmore in 1895 with the line being extended to Bankstown in 1909, and then on to Regents Park on the Lidcombe-Cabramatta line in 1928. Dulwich Hill was opened as an intermediate station on the original branch section during 1895, originally named Wardell Road (for the street that passes over the top of it) before being given its current name in 1920.

During 1916, a new two-track goods line was laid adjacent to the Bankstown Line, on its northern side, between Marrickville and Campsie, from where it veered north-east to Enfield. A goods branch from this line, north up to what was to become Balmain Road Junction in Rozelle (near present day Lilyfield light rail stop) also opened that year. This created a new triangular goods junction, again named Wardell Road, at Dulwich

Hill, with the eastern fork opposite the station platform and the western fork about 200 metres back towards Hurlstone Park. During 1922, the full branch from Balmain/Rozelle on to Darling Harbour Yard (itself already linked by a branch line from Sydney Yard) was commissioned, while 1925 saw a new branch created off the Goods Line from Marrickville to Port Botany (crossing over the Illawarra line just south of Sydenham Station). Although adjacent to the Bankstown Line (and for a time, connected to it at various points), this Goods Line network has largely operated separate to passenger services.

Unlike other intermediate Bankstown Line stations later rebuilt following their commissioning, Dulwich Hill has retained its original island platform layout, and it also still boasts its original buildings, including its wooden, street-level ticket office and kiosk. Originally worked by steam-hauled services, the Bankstown Line was electrified during 1926, with necessary sections of the Goods Line following between 1967 and 1985. Following the end of electric locomotive usage in NSW freight traffic during 2002, the Goods Line overhead was left unused, and in many places, has since been removed.

With increased decentralisation of freight traffic out of inner Sydney since the 1980s, the rail yards at Darling Harbour and Rozelle were eventually decommissioned and removed, which led to the Goods Line from Wardell Road falling out of use. The section from Ultimo, through Darling Harbour to Lilyfield was converted (in stages) for light rail use between 1996-2000 and, with the end of Rozelle Yard operations in 2007, work began during 2010 in similarly rebuilding the remainder of the line back to Wardell Road Junction. This was when the western fork at Dulwich Hill was abandoned, while the eastern fork was converted into a single-track terminus for what is today the L1 Inner West Light Rail. The full L1 from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill was opened in 2014.

That year also saw the T3 Bankstown Line nominated for conversion as part of the Sydney Rapid Transit extension of what was then the North West Rail Link south from Chatswood. Later known as Sydney Metro City & Southwest, early works began on the T3 ahead of the major conversion work, and in the case of Dulwich Hill, this involved the building of a new western footbridge and the installation of lifts. Opening in October 2023,



**Left (page 52):** Pacific National's 8229 heads west beneath Wardell Road at Dulwich Hill, with No.1153 Down container shuttle from Port Botany, bound for St Marys. This view illustrates the placement of the elevated ticket office/kiosk. Until 2023 this was the only exit to the station, but the new western footbridge/concourse has given Dulwich Hill a second entry point, and a more direct pedestrian link to the nearby L1 terminus.

**Above:** CAF Urbos 3 light rail vehicle 2114 slows as it enters the L1 terminus at Dulwich Hill. This corridor was once occupied by the dual-track Rozelle/Darling Harbour goods branch, before this section of track was converted for light rail use between 2010 and 2014. The Urbos 3 trams were all withdrawn in November 2021 due to cracks found in the bogie boxes of each vehicle, due to design flaws. Eventually a number of Alstom Citadis 305 light rail vehicles were re-allocated from the L2/L3 Kingsford/Randwick route to replace the Urbos 3s until they could be assessed, repaired and returned to service. At the time of this photograph, although obviously the Urbos 3s had returned to the L1 service, several Citadis trams continued to supplement them on the line.

**Below:** The view looking west to the brick station building. Not quite as flash as the structures at either Canterbury and Marrickville, the other intermediate stations were given more modest buildings when the original section opened between Sydenham and Belmore in 1895.



the new footbridge provided a more direct link between the railway station and the nearby light rail terminus, which previously had involved passengers leaving the station at the traditional Wardell Road exit, then turning down Bedford Lane before descending to the light rail platform. At the same time, new 'metro-style' station sign mounts and seating were installed, although for the moment, the station retains its standard orange Sydney Trains signs.

The exact date for the full closure of the T3 between Sydenham and Bankstown for final conversion to metro operation has not yet been announced, but it will follow the commissioning of Stage 1 of operations between Chatswood and Sydenham, which is expected to occur in mid-2024. The conversion work is expected to take about 12 months to complete, during which time buses will replace trains, while it is expected that patronage on the L1 will increase during the same period. During this time, freight traffic on what is now the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) owned goods lines between Enfield and Marrickville is expected to continue more or less as normal, some periods of full possession notwithstanding.

Whether it remains so, is currently unclear, but Dulwich Hill is at the moment one of the best places to observe operations on the freight line and given that all traffic between Enfield-Cooks River/Botany and Enfield-Meeks Road Junction pass through here, for sheer amount of freight trains, Dulwich Hill is one of the busiest places in Sydney. In terms of other local attractions, Dulwich Hill Station is adjacent to several local cafes and restaurants, while the adjacent L1 opens up connections to other nearby culinary options, as well as Tramsheds at Harold Park and Norton Street, Leichhardt, for starters.

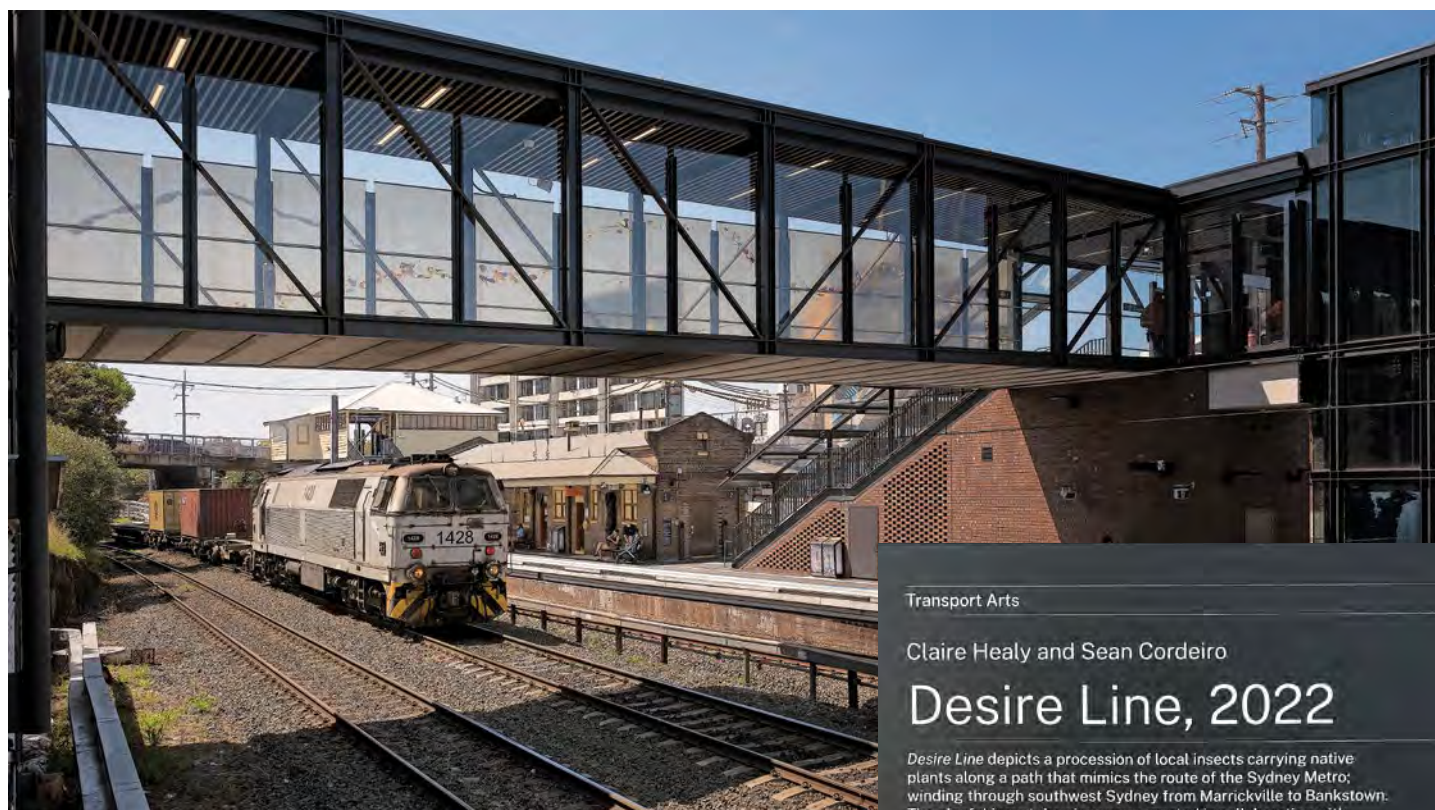
As of January 2024, when this was written, Dulwich Hill was on Sydney Trains' T3 Bankstown Line with services running between the City Circle and Liverpool/Lidcombe via Bankstown. Most services are operated by A and B Set Waratahs, with some also operated by M Set Millenniums, and during the peak hours by the older stainless-steel K Sets. We'll look at this again post metro-conversion in 2025. Aside from the L1 Inner West Light Rail, Dulwich Hill Station is also served by bus route 412 between Campsie and Martin Place via Earlwood and Camperdown. There should still be a month or two available to readers to go and enjoy Dulwich Hill as it is described in this article, but the metro conversion will change the experience substantially.

*Next: Valley Heights*

### Quick facts

Distance from Sydney Central	7.87 kilometres
Elevation	22 metres above sea level
Opened	1895
Platform configuration	Single island platform
Departures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to Sydney: 88 (weekdays)</li> <li>• Up to Sydney: 85 (weekends)</li> </ul>

*With sincere thanks to John Hoyle for his assistance in preparing this article.*



**Above:** Former Danish MZ locomotive 1428 heads west through the newly upgraded Dulwich Hill Station with Qube's T251 trip freight from Port Botany to Minto. Just visible in the new footbridge is the 'Desire Lines' mural on the glass by artists Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro.

**Right:** The provided caption information for the Desire Lines mural incorporated into the new footbridge, which can be seen in the view of locomotive 1428, adorning the frosted glass walls of the new structure. All stations between Marrickville and Bankstown have received new art installations as part of the early works metro conversion preparation at each location.

Transport Arts

Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro

## Desire Line, 2022

*Desire Line* depicts a procession of local insects carrying native plants along a path that mimics the route of the Sydney Metro; winding through southwest Sydney from Marrickville to Bankstown. The playful insect drawings were created in collaboration with students from Dulwich Hill School of Visual Arts and Design.

A desire line is created by the repeated traffic of human pedestrians, large animals, insects or even yeast cultures. A train line can be seen as a desire line at metropolitan scale.

The only phenomena in the world that is comparable to the infrastructure that humans build are insect colonies. Ideas informed by Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* give us the impression that the social lives of our close relatives, the Great Apes, best inform us about our own human social interactions. But when we look at the relative scale of the mighty nests created by ants, or the intricacy of a butterfly's cocoon, we realise that our interconnected industrial lives are in fact more akin to the lives of these incredible insects.

Transparent graphic film interlayer between laminated glass, 14 panels, 24.1 x 3 metres.

The 10 glass artworks from Marrickville to Bankstown were developed with the assistance of X Squared Design. This artwork was created with contributions from Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design: Billie Armstrong, Mackella Bides-Gray, Griffin Cain, Amelia Clement, Otto Dines, Hunter Edmonds, Edie Farrae-Melton, Malorie Graham, Aryn Griffiths, Meredith Harwood, Oscar Hartley, Ian Kim, Sai King, Micia Kollieva, Jamie Lavater, Zylphar Marsh, Charlie Mendoza Mendez, Rosie Bibe Mitchell, Rhiannon Mu, Natcha Nipattakosol, Lucien Reis, Chisca Sagnier, Lola Slesman, Vanja Starcevic, Minka Thorp, Erin Yao.

Commissioned by Transport for NSW

[transport.nsw.gov.au/desire-line](https://transport.nsw.gov.au/desire-line)

Transport for NSW acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which *Desire Line* is situated. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and recognise their continued connection to land and waters.



**Above:** The stairs and lift linking Dulwich Hill Station with the adjacent L1 light rail terminus (behind the photographer). The new footbridge shown in this view has enabled a more direct connection between the two modes, whereas previously pedestrians had to loop round via Bedford Lane and Wardell Road. The stairs (and photographer) are on the spot once occupied by the east fork junction points between the former branch from Rozelle/Darling Harbour and the Goods Line still visible in the right hand foreground. The L1 light rail route now occupies the bulk of the former branch right-of-way, except for the triangle junction's former west fork, which sits abandoned about 200 metres to the south (or right) of this view.



**Above:** Looking east towards the Wardell Road station exit, on the right is the ticket office, while just glimpsed on the left is the station kiosk.

**Left:** The ticket office is now behind the photographer in this view of the small station kiosk. The stairs down to the platform are out of sight on the left, while the exit to Wardell Road is on the right.

All photographs taken on Wednesday 15 November 2023