# SPANISH FLEECE HITS THE 'LATE RAIL'

SCOOP

ANNABEL HENNESSY

SYDNEY'S $2.1 billion light rail project is so far behind schedule that workers would need to lay about 260m of track a day to get construction deadlines back on schedule — a work rate 10 times the current average.

As any hope the state government has of hitting an early 2019 deadline for the $2.1 billion development fades, The Daily Telegraph can today also reveal one of the main design firms is suing the Spanish company responsible for the project because it claims its workers aren't being paid. Highly regarded Australian construction company GHD yesterday started the process of court action against Acciona for unpaid invoices under the Security of Payments Act.

Last night GHD declined

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## for $2.1b project

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to comment, but there are concerns this spat will cause even more delays.

Part of the European consortium ALTRAC which is delivering the light rail, Acciona is a Spanish company that is responsible for design, construction and integration of the 12km route.

In response to questions about the legal action, a spokeswoman for ALTRAC said: "This is a complex project. We are in ongoing commercial discussions with our design consultants. There are no other commercial claims from our subcontractors constructing the light rail."

Acciona hired GHD as a subcontractor for the design.

Founded in Melbourne, GHD was involved in the delivery of the Inner West Light Rail and has previously worked on rail projects in the Gold Coast, Newcastle, Adelaide and Melbourne.

The dispute is the latest in a series of controversies surrounding Acciona, after The Daily Telegraph last week revealed Transport for NSW was splashing $200,000 to send two light rail bureaucrats to Europe on 10 bimonthly trips to hold meetings with Acciona.

In one January 2017 case, the state government was forced to pay out an extra $4000 on cancelling and rebooking flights for one trip because Acciona decided at the last minute it wanted to reschedule the meeting.

Despite concerns the Light Rail is running late, Acciona has also been attempting to get more money for the project. Last July, The Telegraph revealed Acciona had asked for an extra $340 million to finish the $2.1 billion project because of alterations to the route and from the discovery of utility connections and wires found under George St.