

## **INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT**

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As a retired engineer and academic I have been around long enough to know that it is rare for projects like Westconnex to be justified without dubious vehicle usage predictions, environmental assessments and consideration of alternative solutions. Westconnex would appear to be just another example along the lines of the cross-city tunnel and the Lane Cove tunnel in Sydney and the Brisbane Airport Motorway. The justification for such projects seems to be largely what pre-construction political advantage can be gained out of a proposal and later by how many jobs are created and how much money can be made out of it. This in turn requires ensuring that alternative public transport and vehicle routes are blocked, by traffic control eg traffic lights timed to limit usage, or by legal agreements such as has been the case in Melbourne where a train-line to the airport can only now be considered decades after the airport was opened. It also requires inflated vehicle use for profitability predictions and deflated vehicle traffic for environmental acceptability. A satisfactory way of finding the best solution for traffic congestion on roads is rarely going to be obtained by building more or wider roads. Such an action is like trying to control drug addicts by giving away drugs. My memory of the original justification for Westconnex was to have a tunnel for container trucks travelling to and from Port Botany. This morphed into Westconnex without a connection to Port Botany or the airport. Why wasn't the existing train-line upgraded? It appears that it would detract from private enterprise profits when Westconnex was completed and sold off. Now it appears to be too late to stop this stupidity other than the possibility of not building the tunnel to the North Shore which presumably, if constructed, trucks will not be permitted to use. It is enough to make me glad to be old and therefore not have to experience the worst of the problems that Westconnex will result in; the disappointment of drivers and public transport users.