

**Submission  
No 263**

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

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## Inquiry into the impact of the WestConnex Project

Submission from:

Paul Jeffery

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**Recommendation:** The long suffering NSW taxpayers are relying upon your good selves to demand that the M4-5 link be halted and the project to date be critically examined and sanity prevail. Public transport and rail freight transport experts should be engaged to show how transport in Sydney can be designed for this and the next century. Sydney and NSW deserve better than old 1950s solutions. If Westconnex is allowed to continue what happens when capacity is reached as predicted within a decade?

Westconnex can accurately be described as the tollroad that ate Sydney. No independent transport expert supports it and no government expert can tell us why it is being built nor its purpose apart from a few vague notions about reducing congestion and getting trucks off the roads.

The project has taken on a life of its own as it devours budgets, reputations and whole communities which have been laid to waste. That the government's own documentation shows any benefits in travel times are at best minimal and at worst easily swallowed up by the margin of error, what the documentation doesn't explain is that these benefits if any will be lost within a decade due to induced traffic.

That the government can and did approach this project demanding that public transport alternative options not be considered is a case of maladministration at the very least.

One does not have to be a transport expert to understand that if this project was designed and developed to be performance based for public benefit it would fail on every count and further If public benefit was the aim, to reduce traffic congestion, improve amenity, air quality and build public assets then the project has again failed as there are many more efficient alternatives.

Firstly, if one of the main purported aims was to get trucks off the roads wouldn't one look to improve the derisory amount of containers transported by rail which at a present represents a low 16%. The costs to improve rail freight and diverting those containers not required to transit through Sydney to either Wollongong or Newcastle would be minuscule in comparison to the price of Westconnex.

**Recommendation:** Determine why rail freight improvements were not fully examined and why.

If rail signalling across the Sydney rail network were upgraded there would be massive efficiency gains and again all brought in well under the budget of Westconnex. Improved signalling opens up all manner of options with faster and more frequent trains both passenger and freight.

**Recommendation:** Determine why this option was not investigated and where the decision was made and by whom not to explore public transport solutions.

With the efficiencies mentioned above and improvements to Sydney buses it becomes debatable whether Westconnex would have been required at all. At an estimated cost of \$40-50 billion Westconnex has blown away an opportunity to make Sydney liveable, breathable and navigable.

That the project was split into stages and no one allowed to examine the plan in its entirety has made critical examination difficult without reason, there are no valid reasons why the whole plan should not have been presented and judged on its merits, unless of course it was known that it didn't stack up and that it would have been totally rejected by the public, those now paying to build it and to use it.

**Recommendation:** Examine the evolution of the Westconnex plan from origins to its latest incarnation, determine who the beneficiaries were meant to be, the public or otherwise, determine all those persons, politicians or departments that had influence over the plan and why any changes were made.

- (a) the adequacy of the business case for the WestConnex project, including the cost-benefits ratio.

As the business and case and true cost have never been fully released to the public nor updated to reflect the massive and continued changes in relation to the aims of the project where it goes or what it is supposed to achieve it is extremely difficult for members of the public to have any confidence that the business case or the BCR has merit as stands. There has been no independent examination of the business case, nor full disclosure of all costs associated with the project authorised or released by the government.

The original aims of Westconnex were to get freight from the docks and the airport to a transport hub in western Sydney, it bears no relationship to what the project is today. The original cost of the project at \$10.6 billion has almost certainly doubled and yet we are asked to believe that the BCR remains stable and on track to deliver the efficiencies so badly needed for transport across Sydney. That Westconnex does not reach the airport or the docks is a fact that will be repeated in other submissions. This is the biggest most expensive road project in our history and is costing more to build per kilometre than The Channel Tunnel from England to France. There should be full disclosure to the public of all aspects of this project.

If at any time the members of the enquiry feel that these suggested recommendations are difficult, time consuming, expensive or would delay the project please bear in mind that those tasked with designing building and commissioning Westconnex the most expensive tollroad project in Australia should also have completed this examination before the project was considered at all.

Please also consider that even though halting the project would be expensive, to allow it to continue would condemn the people of NSW to an ever expanding 1950s technology that as

yet shows no sign of ever being completed as more stages are always required to pay for the stage under construction. Westconnex is an elaborate Ponzi scheme paid for by the public.

**Recommendations:**

**That a forensic audit of the business plan** its history and development to date be conducted to determine its validity and show where the benefits of the project lie, with the public or the eventual owners of the project.

**That a forensic examination be undertaken of all costs** associated with the building of Westconnex to includes any and all be they incurred directly or indirectly planned or otherwise.

**A forensic examination of all costs incurred** and changes to all suburbs surrounding the project and the effects on the residents.

A forensic examination conducted into the Westconnex BCR the elements of its composition and a determination of its validity.

**A full examination of the effects on the lives** of all those that have had property purchased or affected in the planning, construction and eventual commissioning of Westconnex be they private, commercial or otherwise.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs of all work commissioned or otherwise by the RMS or any other government agency to include the re-routing, upgrade of all and any services, roads, footpaths, water, electricity, telephony, internet, gas, sewerage, storm drainage and waterways or other during construction planned or otherwise.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs of all changes made or planned for any traffic signalling, clearways, parking or other to accommodate traffic during the construction phase or finished project.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs to business affected by any changed traffic conditions associated with the construction or delivery of the project.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs to any and all government agencies for the supply, loan or secondment of staff to work on the Westconnex project, which should include the loss of efficiencies to the original agencies.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs to any government agency for the direct or indirect hire of contractors for any purpose regarding the project.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs for the loss to the environment and community of all trees, shrubs and parkland and wildlife.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs for purchase or gifting, voluntary or otherwise of private, commercial, local or state government lands properties and premises to the project.

Full disclosure, discovery, costs and or compensation paid to any entity involved with the leasing arrangements, purchase or sale or lease of lands now occupied by Dan Murphys at Darley Rd Leichhardt.

Determine the total of individual properties purchased to date commercial and private to accommodate the building of Westconnex.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs of all legal proceedings incurred for advice, defence or prosecution or the purchase of any person or property temporary or otherwise.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs for the provision of security personnel by police or others at any venue to do with construction, promotion, education or otherwise of the project at all and any venue.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs incurred for any advertising of jobs, television promotion or otherwise of the project in any form connected with the education of or public engagement.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs of any financial penalties or otherwise issued by any government agency to any contractor or persons working on the project for any reason.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs and outcomes of any type of complaint made to any government agency about the project to include SafeWork NSW, EPA, DPE, local government or other and the costs in time and manpower to resolve the issues.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs to Local Government for staffing, legal work, traffic amelioration or modelling or other in the accommodation of the project.

The disclosure, discovery or estimation of lost efficiencies borne by business and public for the delays, loss of sales, delays in getting to work or otherwise during construction.

Full disclosure, discovery of numbers and costs of Community Grants negotiated between the SMC and any other party. The full disclosure of these contracts to determine if any restrictions were placed upon those organisations that sign up to receive grants in discussing or objecting to the project.

Full disclosure, discovery and costs for any insurances or indemnities provided by the government or any of its agencies to any person or organisation involved with the project.

**Recommendation:** Examine what the benefits would be to build public transport and rail freight alternatives to achieve the same aims of the project or better.

**Recommendation:** Examine the adequacy or otherwise and the independence of the design and testing of air quality and other environmental impacts of the project during construction and planned use of Westconnex.

**Recommendation:** Examine the adequacy and independence of all agencies in providing full frank and fearless advice in all aspects of the project. Please advise where better outcomes for the public were overruled by any persons and why for improved commercial outcomes.

