

**Submission
No 355**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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Westconnex Public Enquiry Submission 30.8.18

To the NSW Parliament,

Thank you for holding this enquiry. It is essential that NSW residents are given the chances for our concerns to be heard and acted upon and also that any corruption inherent in this project or process be exposed and punished.

I am really worried about this project for many reasons and urge the Parliament to stop it and reassess the plans to find better, more suitable alternatives. These are my concerns:

ON A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL:

- 1 International cities like LA are realizing that motorways don't fix the problem of traffic flow and easing congestion and are embracing other alternative solutions and most international cities are focussing on public transport instead.
- 2 We need for everyones' sake, and the future of our children, to find cleaner, greener alternatives to people movement and traffic flows instead of motorways – let alone tolled ones which adds further financial strain on its residents.
- 3 As an international traveller, I have witnessed first hand effective, well managed and affordable public transport solutions in Canada, Britain, Switzerland and France to name a few, and I am embarrassed to see our current governments lack of foresight and sensible solutions in this area. We should be learning from success stories overseas and not making the same mistakes that other countries have in the past.
- 4 If the Western Harbour Tunnel goes ahead in the way they are proposing, it will stir up the layers of toxic levels of sludge – currently lying undisturbed, which would potentially ruin Sydney harbour. This would irreparably damage our jewel of a city in terms of our harbours health for now and the future, let alone our international reputation, and the billions of tourism dollars which come to Sydney every year.
- 5 Sydney was in the past rated as number 3 in the world for livability which has recently slipped to 9 – 10. This is predominantly in my view, because of the toll road chaos already in place, the lack of sensible affordable transport on a massive scale and overdevelopment. My beautiful city of Sydney is sliding downhill at a rapid rate which tears at my heart.

ON A STATE AND CITY LEVEL

- 1 It is a ludicrous waste of public funds which continues to blow out its budgets on a fundamentally flawed plan which doesn't even fulfil its initial brief.
- 2 We need those billions of dollars spent on underground trains and high speed trains between cities as well as extensive increased bus services.
- 3 Public transport should be kept public and not privatised! Keep the revenue from it rather than sell it off for short term profit and lose that resource forever. It's a no brainer!
- 4 The choices the current State Government are making are reckless, stupid, short term, money grabbing, wasteful and also it seems corrupt! They should be ashamed!
- 5 Our government has a duty of care which they are blatantly ignoring and pushing ahead with stupid, flawed plans with unrealistic outcomes that will damage Sydney and its wider regions forever if Westconnex continues. It has already destroyed vast parts of the city.

- 6 Many transport specialists along with thousands of us believe it will not fix the problem but will simply reach capacity quickly and then cause more traffic jams; - as history has shown us in the past! And we will be charged for the inconvenience as well if they have their way!
- 7 It has become clear that the Liberal Government has prioritised toll road projects ahead of public transport for some time (which serves to make their wealthy mates richer and the rest of us poorer!)
- 8 It seems clear that the inept choices made by this Govt are not working and then they try to blame the unions when things go wrong and they haven't put the funding into trains etc!!
- 9 The cost of Westconnex is massive and has already doubled to \$16.8 billion with projected costs to escalate to \$45 billion and beyond. Even the Westconnex CEO himself has not ruled out further cost increases in a public statement.
- 10 Official estimates of budget don't include consideration of all costs including: The cost of compulsory land and property acquisition, the cost of legal challenges to compulsory acquisitions, the environmental and health impacts from increased car usage or potential reimbursement to the toll companies if the expected and revenue use does not occur! These are all currently excluded from WestConnex's capital cost.
- 11 I am also deeply concerned at the obvious monopoly which would occur if Transurban are allowed to acquire Westconnex if it goes ahead. They already own 7 out of 9 toll roads in Sydney which to me already screams of monopoly!
- 12 It also seems pretty clear that property development is behind a lot of the choices made, which is being used as an excuse for light rail which in itself has already destroyed so many businesses across the country and moves a small amount of people at one time.
- 13 Toxic pollution created by this toll road network would be devastating to the health of all Sydney siders, - particularly those near the stacks and exit and entry points.
- 14 Unfiltered stack – as proposed by WC are illegal in other countries including Japan and Spain and it is unacceptable that our government is not showing words best practise in this area.
- 15 The Business Case for this project is inaccurate and misleading. A Citigroup report indicated that the traffic modelling figures had overestimated usage of WestConnex by 10%. Given this and other expert analyses of the WestConnex Business Case showing its deficiencies and inaccuracies, the Business Case predictions and cost benefit ratio are unreliable.
- 16 Previous toll road projects have overestimated the travel time savings and drivers propensity to use the toll road to the point where the toll roads have been financial disasters. These include the Lane Cove Tunnel and Cross City Tunnel.
- 17 Many transport and infrastructure experts, 11 councils, nearly 50 action groups, transport unions, students and thousands of citizens object to this project.

ON A LOCAL LEVEL:

- 1 If the top of my street is turned into a cul-de-sac, as is proposed, getting in and out of our house would be nearly impossible with all local and incoming traffic pushed to a couple of narrow parallel streets. The area is already under pressure with hundreds of extra vehicles and buses accessing King George Park. If WC proceeds, getting in and out of our suburb will be impractical, tedious and time consuming.
- 2 The planning so far of traffic lights, one way roads and access points in and out of this suburb has already been so badly handled, that I foresee nothing but further poor choices and inconvenient consequences for all of us local residents.

- 3 Stage 3 would bring hundreds of polluting vehicles exiting to the top of our street plus proposed tons of carcinogenic particles from the tunnels a few streets away. This is incomprehensible and again shows a government not showing proper duty of care.
- 4 The current design with stacks nearby would directly impact on our 3 local schools and submit us all to pollution of life changing or death giving proportions.
- 5 The Anzac bridge is already at capacity so the local design is totally flawed!

AND LASTLY ON A PERSONAL LEVEL:

- 1 I have lost friends in the area due to forced acquisitions
- 2 I have recently lost my garage and mechanic (Gabriel Motors) who have supported me for decades.
- 3 The community recently lost Liquorland within walking distance which is a loss to the neighbourhood.
- 4 We would lose our close local bus stop if stage 3 goes ahead.
- 5 I am petrified of the potential increase in pollution during construction and afterwards as my son already has breathing difficulties with the current level of pollution and dust in Sydney.
- 6 I don't think I could personally cope with the 24 hour noise, disturbance, truck movements, loss of amenities and access to my house and I worry for my mental and physical health in that environment. I have witnessed the devastating impacts on many people already and am very frightened.
- 7 I, and many experts don't think it will fix the problem so the whole things makes me feel nauseous and disgusted and appalled by our Governments actions. It seems to be a blatant disregard to our health, sanity, needs of the community or desires of the residents and must be stopped.