

## **Online questionnaire report:**

### **Inquiry into road tolling regimes**

Portfolio Committee 6 launched an online questionnaire to enable public participation in an efficient and accessible way.

The questionnaire was not intended as a statistically valid, random survey. Like the submission process, respondents self-selected in choosing to participate. This means that respondents were not a representative sample of the New South Wales population, but rather interested members of the public who volunteered their time to have a say. It should be noted that some participants may reside outside of New South Wales.

The questionnaire was complementary to and did not replace the usual submission process. The submission portal was also available to individuals and organisations who wished to provide a more detailed response to the inquiry's terms of reference. In this regard, some respondents may have completed the questionnaire and also made a submission.

#### **Questions**

The questionnaire comprised 11 questions. This included background information about the respondents. A mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions sought the views of the respondents on:

- what toll roads they use, and what capacity they use them in
- how regularly toll roads are used
- the average costs of using toll roads
- time saved by using toll roads
- the experience of claiming toll relief
- the impacts of the costs of tolls

The full list of questions is at Appendix 1.

## Responses to questions

The questionnaire was open from 26 May 2021 to 21 July 2021 and received 503 responses. A sample of answers and summaries of responses are provided for each question below. The samples have been selected to represent the various viewpoints expressed in the responses.

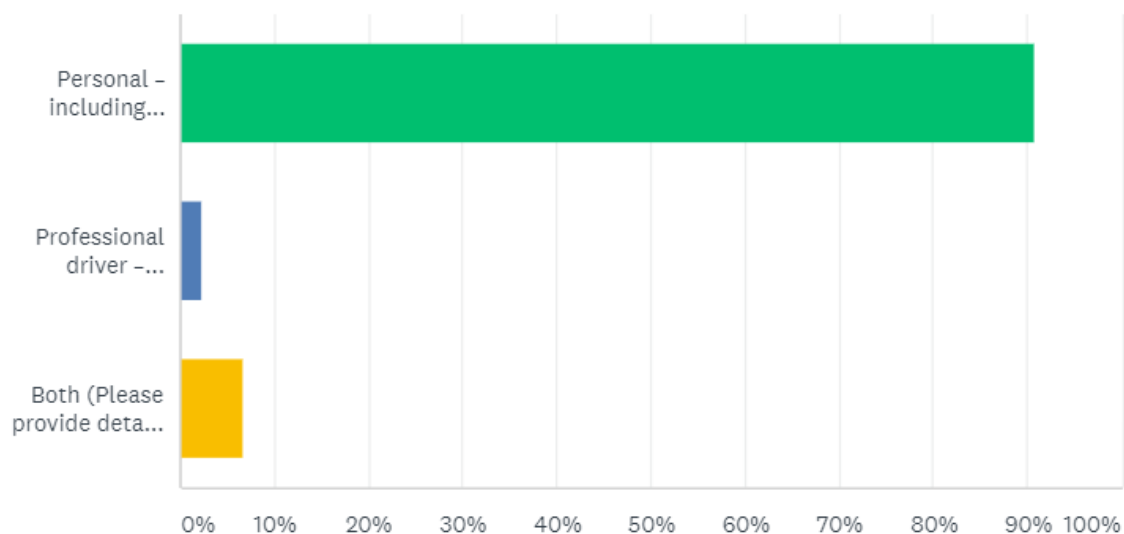
### *In a regular month, which toll roads do you use?*

Respondents were given 11 toll road options to choose from, in addition to being able to specify another toll road used. The 22 'other' responses included using no toll roads, or using toll roads rarely.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Hills M2 Motorway	26.45% 128
▼ M5 South-West Motorway	68.60% 332
▼ Westlink M7 Motorway	50.00% 242
▼ Eastern Distributor	28.72% 139
▼ Sydney Harbour Tunnel/Sydney Harbour Bridge	28.93% 140
▼ Cross City Tunnel	18.60% 90
▼ Lane Cove Tunnel	17.56% 85
▼ WestConnex - New M4	28.10% 136
▼ WestConnex - New M8	22.52% 109
▼ WestConnex - M5 East	40.50% 196
▼ NorthConnex	11.78% 57
▼ Other (please specify) <a href="#">Responses</a>	4.55% 22

### *In what capacity do you use toll roads? Select one of these options:*

- Personal – including commuting and travelling as a passenger where the fare is passed on*
- Professional driver – including as a rideshare driver, taxi driver or truck driver*
- Both – please provide detail on your use of toll roads*

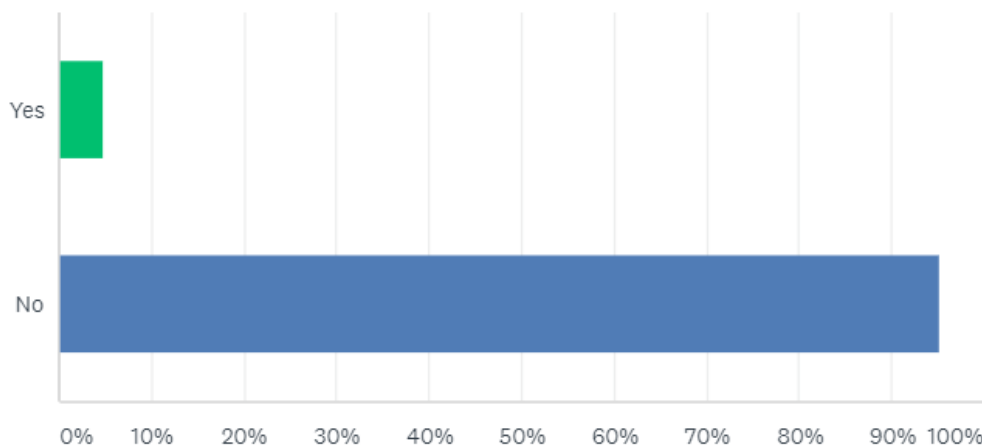


Most respondents answered that they use toll roads in a personal capacity (90.85%), with only 2.39% of respondents answering that they use toll roads in a professional capacity.

The remaining 6.76% of respondents answered that they use toll roads both for personal use, and for professional or work use.

*Do you regularly drive a truck? Select one of these options:*

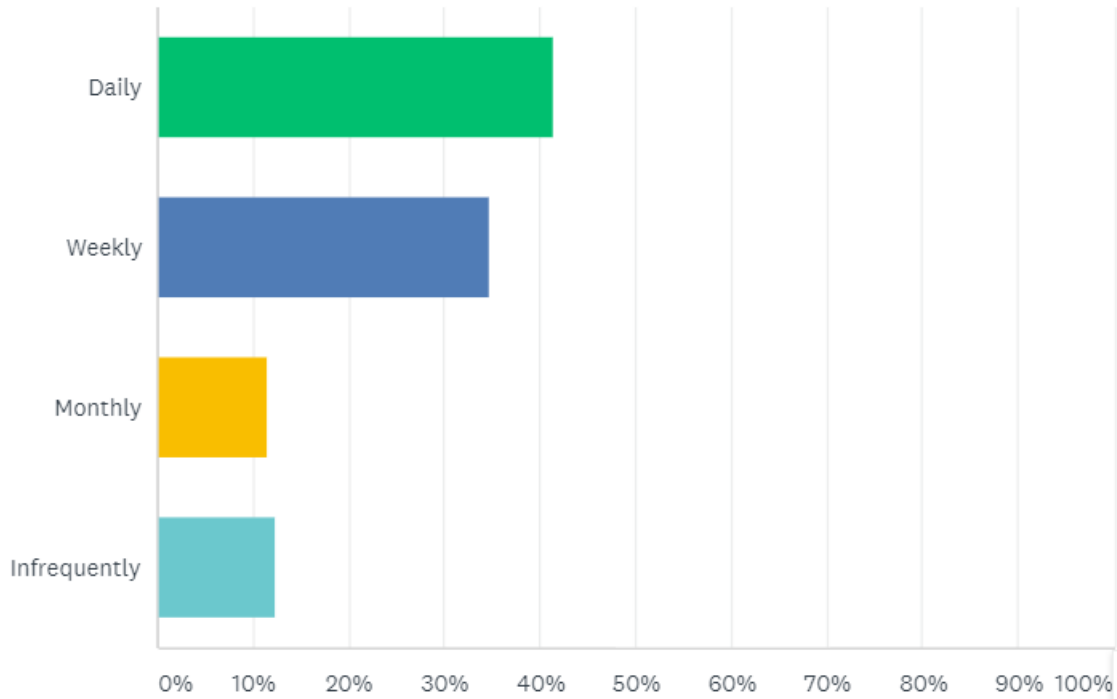
- a) *Yes*
- b) *No*



Most respondents answered that they do not regularly drive a truck (95.22%), with only 4.78% responding that they do regularly drive a truck.

*How often do you use toll roads? Select one of these options:*

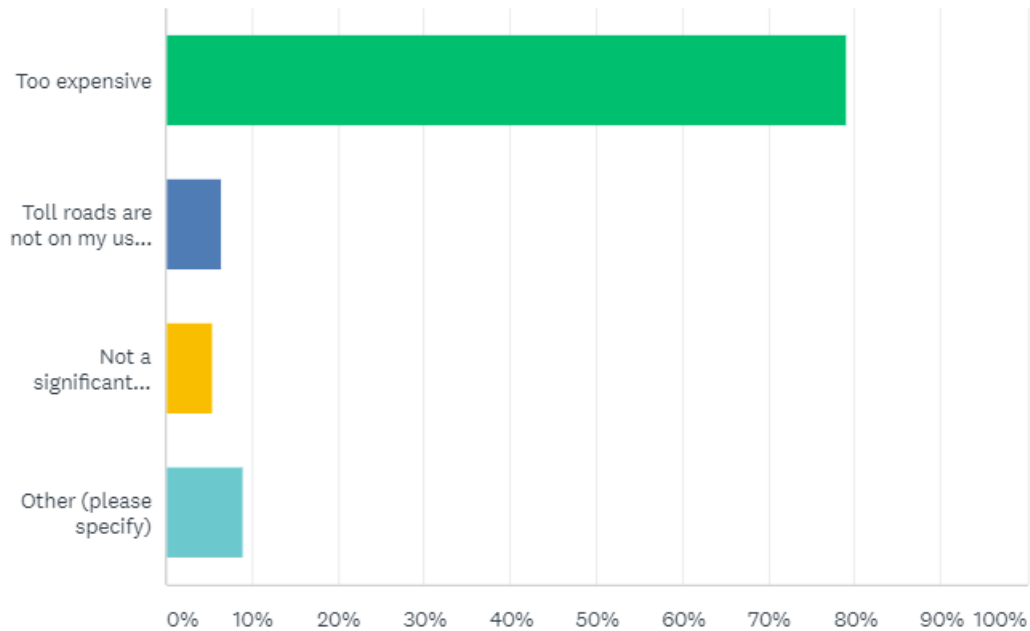
- a) Daily*
- b) Weekly*
- c) Monthly*
- d) Infrequently*



The majority of respondents answered that they use toll roads either daily (41.35%) or weekly (34.79%). The remaining respondents answered that they use tolls either monthly (11.53%) or infrequently (12.33%).

*If you don't use toll roads frequently, why not? Select one of these options:*

- a) Too expensive*
- b) Toll roads are not on my usual route/s*
- c) Not a significant time saving*
- d) Other (please specify)*

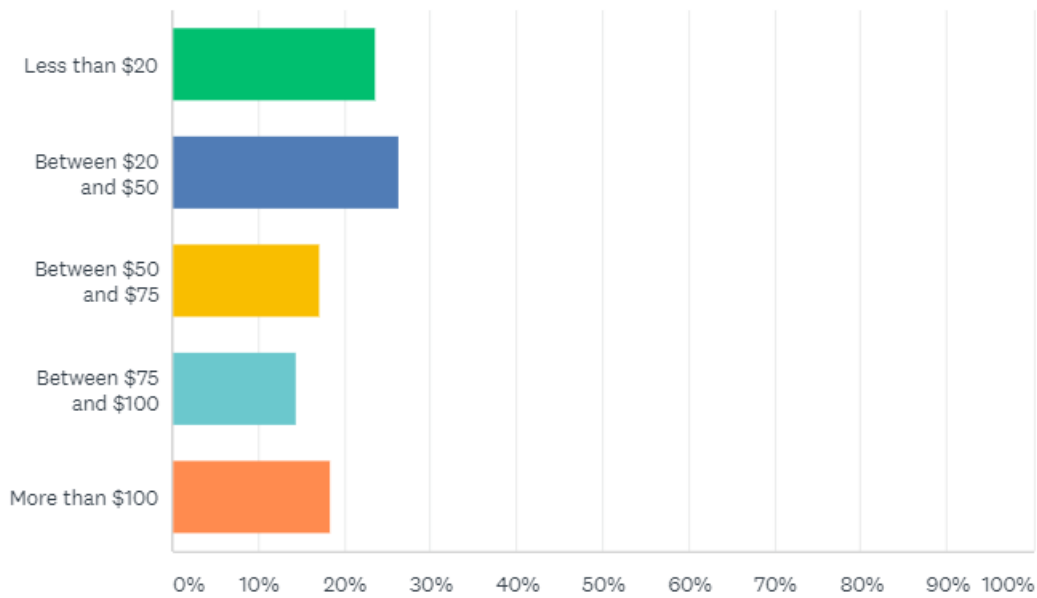


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Too expensive	79.03% 358
▼ Toll roads are not on my usual route/s	6.40% 29
▼ Not a significant time saving	5.52% 25
▼ Other (please specify) <a href="#">Responses</a>	9.05% 41
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>453</b>

Most respondents answered that they don't use toll roads frequently because they are too expensive (79.03%). The remaining respondents answered that toll roads are not on their usual routes (6.40%) or do not provide a significant time saving (5.52%). Another 9.05% provided another reason, including:

- a combination of all of the above listed reasons
- traffic
- potholes
- other transport options being utilised.

*How much, on average, are you paying in tolls per month?*



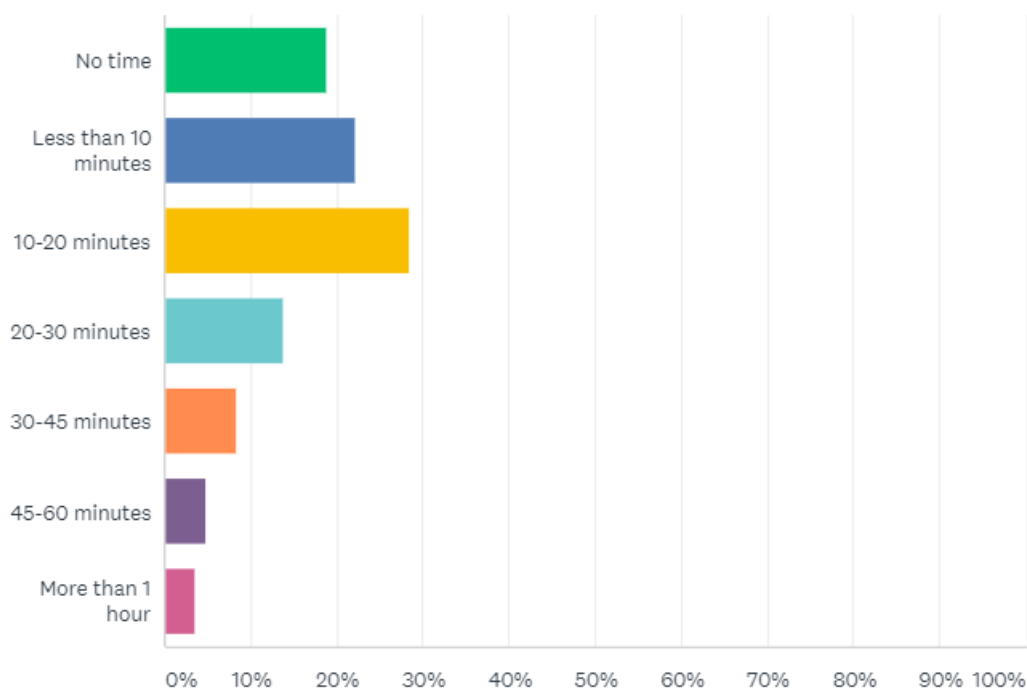
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Less than \$20	23.60% 118
Between \$20 and \$50	26.40% 132
Between \$50 and \$75	17.20% 86
Between \$75 and \$100	14.40% 72
More than \$100	18.40% 92
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500</b>

The majority of respondents answered that they either payed between \$20 and \$50 per month (26.40%) or less than \$20 per month (23.60%).

A further 17.20% answered that they paid between \$50 and \$75 per month, and 14.40% paid between \$75 and \$100 per month.

Finally, 18.40% answered that they paid more than \$100 per month.

*If you use toll roads to commute to or from work, how much time do you save, on average, using toll roads instead of driving on other roads?*



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ No time	18.74% 89
▼ Less than 10 minutes	22.11% 105
▼ 10-20 minutes	28.42% 135
▼ 20-30 minutes	13.89% 66
▼ 30-45 minutes	8.42% 40
▼ 45-60 minutes	4.84% 23
▼ More than 1 hour	3.58% 17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>475</b>

*Have you ever claimed any toll relief? If so, please describe your experience?*

Many respondents answered that they have not ever claimed any toll relief, often due to not having been aware this was available or not knowing how to access it.

- 'No. Didn't know that I could'.
- 'No I haven't, I am not aware of the process'.

Of those who answered that they had claimed toll relief, most stated that they had done this for the M5 South-West Motorway. Some respondents claimed that the process of claiming the cashback was relatively straightforward, but could be simplified further.

- 'Yes. But being honest, It doesn't affect much'.
- 'Yes. I have for the M5 tolls only. It's an okay process, could be a lot easier though and done on an app not a website'.
- 'Yes. Easy to do online. Good to have a decent amount of money deposited into my account'.

However, a large number of respondents also stated that the toll relief was insufficient in making tolls more affordable.

- 'Insignificant to the amount I spend on tolls'.
- 'Yes, claimed to get free rego...which only amounts to about 3 weeks of tolls'.
- 'M5 cashback but that only gives part cash back. Majority of my tolls go on Eastern Distributor and M5 east/M8 which are not claimable. The toll relief towards rego renewal is miniscule compared to how much I would spend to take toll roads regularly'.
- 'Claimed toll relief for rego renewal. But the cost of rego is insignificant compared to the weekly toll I pay'.

Further, some respondents explained they were ineligible for toll relief, for reasons such as they were using a business vehicle, did not have a high enough toll bill, or did not have the financial means to pay for 12 months registration at a discounted rate.

- 'No as it takes too much time and sometimes I am not using toll enough to be eligible'.
- 'Only can claim M5 toll when I use my personal car. But 90% of the time I use my work van and can't claim'.
- 'Easy now that it's done online'.
- 'I haven't yet because it is only available on 1 years rego and I haven't been able to afford that expense as of late'.
- 'No as it takes too much time and sometimes I am not using toll enough to be eligible'.

### ***What are the impacts of toll costs on you?***

A large number of respondents answered that high toll costs have a significant impact on their lives. Respondents outlined various financial, personal and emotional impacts of high toll costs.

- 'Huge. Paying extra \$100 a week after claiming M5 Southwest toll. Otherwise it would be around \$200. For me it's a 80 km commute to and from work every day. If not used the toll road it will be extra 2 hours of commute. All these extra cost left less money for us to spend. Having less holidays and picnics for family'.
- 'It is another impost on my budget and just one of those ever rising costs, whilst income falls in real value'.
- 'I have to think twice about my trips. Cost me more in tolls to visit my family than it does in fuel'.
- '\$4,000 out of total combined disposable household income of approx. \$20,000 (after bills) is onerous, impacts on many aspects of life'.
- 'I run a tight budget and the \$40 top ups often come out at a time that I cannot afford it'.



- 'I am on a disability pension so any tolls are a huge impact on my pocket'.
- 'The cost of tolls had grown dramatically. It costs me over \$16 a day in tolls to get to and from work. I have a young family and need to be home to pick them up from school. The cost of tolls has put a massive drain on our family budget. There shouldn't be a toll on roads that have been paid for already'.
- 'The toll costs are impacting myself and my family large amounts of money that could be used to pay for other bills. The toll costs started at a high rate and are always increasing, when we are able to use different routes we tend to in order to reduce the costs of getting somewhere. We try to avoid toll roads because of the cost of using them'.
- 'I have to budget my weekly groceries to afford using tolls to get to work on time. The changes/ introduction of charges to the M4 west is simply ridiculous. I am paying the cost for out of area residents access to faster transport and in return I have to put up with significant influx in traffic in my local residential streets'.

Many respondents answered that the toll costs were prohibitive, and resulted in them being unable to use toll roads, often meaning they had to change their lifestyle or drive on more congested, suburban roads.

- 'I travel to see my wife in hospital in Kogarah. It was costing over \$60 a day. I now use the train which is much cheaper. We spend thousands a year on tolls'.
- 'Currently not employed, the costs are prohibitive. Due to COVID I choose to drive instead of public transport'.
- 'I use the toll roads when travelling to family on the South Coast mainly. Sometimes the M5 tunnel when travelling to the airport but I have changed my route since the toll reintroduction, so less so. The impact is the cost. As a carer for my mother, my income is limited. I use the tolls less than I used to when I worked'.
- 'Prevents me from visiting my daughter and grandchildren who live at Randwick. Only a problem since exorbitant extra toll on part of M5 that was previously included in the same route. Now costs \$22 for 1 visit to my daughter'.
- 'Too expensive to use regularly. Only use toll roads when running late or trying to skip traffic on certain occasions'.
- 'Toll roads are incredibly expensive and cost prohibitive. I often will try to find routes that avoid toll roads as do not find the toll worth the cost. I think a significant number of needless toll roads have been added'.
- 'If I use it every day driving to work return trip, it would cost me over \$2000. Even with the toll relief, I am not willing to part with any money considering my shorter work hours. It's not worth it unless I do a big long trip'.

- 'We avoid going to the city/beaches and go to Wollongong instead'.

Some respondents stated that the impact of toll costs on them and their lifestyle was minimal. However, some stated that this was due to not having to use toll roads regularly.

- 'Minimal due to not having to use them regularly'.
- 'I factor in the cost of tolls in my weekly budget so the impact is very minimal if anything at all'.
- 'Very minimal impact'.

***Is there any other information you would like to share with members of the committee?***

A number of respondents answered that there is a need for increased fairness with regards to toll costs. Specifically, some respondents answered that toll costs unfairly impact low socio-economic communities, and specific geographical areas, such as Western Sydney and South Western Sydney.

- 'Do what's right and restore some integrity and faith in the community for our government, by removing the additional toll on the M5 and ideally scrapping it altogether, at least for the communities of south west Sydney who have been paying for the road for generations now'.
- 'Be considerate of the types of low socio economic families who rely on the tolled roads to get to work . We are already financially struggling'.
- 'I feel that there needs a be a daily capped amount charged and or a discount registration for privately owned business registered vehicles .. people living in southwest Sydney are very much disadvantaged with the current toll rates'.
- 'It feels like that those from the western suburbs are penalised for our post codes. We pay more simply to access more affluent suburbs. And worst of all, in order for us to access higher income rates, we are penalised for the effort'..
- 'Don't punish people for living in Western Sydney'.
- 'Tolls are inhuman and unwarranted. We have paid for these roads. We should not be paying again to a third party with ever increasing and exhausting costs. It is forcing poverty onto the people in the west and the people of NSW'.
- 'Further relief for tolls should be considered for residents of areas that live in the southwest or greater southwest. We need to rely on toll roads to get most places as often the alternative routes don't cope with the traffic well. It would be helpful if residents out here we're eligible to claim cash back on all tollways not just m5'.

Many respondents also stated that they had concerns about profits being generated by toll costs at the expense of the community. This included feedback regarding increasing toll costs, and new

tolls. Further, many respondents called for increased transparency and oversight with regard to the setting of toll costs.

- 'Why does the price keep getting higher and higher if the toll roads in using have already been paid off?'
- 'Remove m5 east tolls as they are charging for a road which was always free!'
- 'I'm fine with the concept of a user pays model, but those tolls should go towards paying the cost of construct the road and should end once that cost has been covered. The incentive of the private companies who financed the construction is to understandably make a return on their investment. However Transurban has a virtual monopoly of toll roads in Sydney, with no competition what incentive to they have to keep tolls low or offer better? I feel that the NSW taxpayer has come out second best!'
- 'I believe Toll roads need to be fairly regulated to ensure transparency and integrity. We cannot pay for per-use tolls when they are so significantly high. A once off annual pass that promotes savings to regular drivers is more appropriate!'

Respondents generally answered that toll costs should be decreased, and more diverse options for toll relief should be introduced. They stated that time savings by using the tolls were not justified by their costs, and the financial burden of tolls was becoming significant and unmanageable.

- 'Yes, Sydney is becoming a frustrating place to live. In addition to rising expenses, the m7 will quickly reduce to 40km/h if there's a vehicle in the breakdown lane. The breakdown lanes are completely out of harm's way. But this makes me also question why tolls are so high, when slow traffic is an ever increasing occurrence!'
- 'There should be a cap on using toll roads, for example capped at \$10 for the day when using them. Sometimes roads are heavily congested this needs to be managed!'
- 'We pay too much tax to be paying too much on tolls!'
- 'The cost of tolls on Sydney roads is excessive and impacts families greatly. People are time poor and try to save time and take the safest route by sticking to motorways but get huge bills on tolls by doing this. It's getting ridiculous!'
- 'The toll roads are expensive, there are little to no alternative routes, half the time during peak times, your capped at 80km or less due to congestion or roadworks!'
- 'People who use tolls everyday should have their amount reduced just like people who use public transport. We pay a lot in taxes, we should have the tolls reduced. Especially in these current circumstances!'
- 'The financial impact of tolls is becoming a greater financial burden on the weekly expenses of my household. This coupled with growth of costs in other areas of life- utilities, mortgage, insurances, I do not know how average income households requiring these roads to commute are meant to be able to get ahead!'

- 'Tolls need to stop going up, it's becoming unmanageable and unbearable for some families trying to make a living. Either let people claim more tolls back as a cash back relief or reduce the costs. If we didn't use tolls it would take about 2 hours to get to work therefore using more fuel. It's a lose-lose situation and more can be done to help commuters especially those in the low to middle income sections including apprentices'.

## Appendix 1: List of questions

1. Contact details (*free text*)  
Name:  
Email address:  
Postcode:
2. In a regular month, which toll roads do you use?
  - Hills M2 Motorway
  - M5 South-West Motorway
  - Westlink M7 Motorway
  - Eastern Distributor
  - Sydney Harbour Tunnel/Sydney Harbour Bridge
  - Cross City Tunnel
  - Lane Cove Tunnel
  - WestConnex – New M4
  - WestConnex – New M8
  - WestConnex – M5 East
  - NorthConnex
  - Other (please specify) (*free text*)
3. In what capacity do you use toll roads?
  - Personal – including commuting and travelling as a passenger where the fare is passed on
  - Professional driver – including as a rideshare, taxi driver, or truck driver
  - Both (please provide detail on your use of toll roads) (*free text*)
4. Do you regularly drive a truck?
  - Yes
  - No
5. How often do you use toll roads?
  - Daily
  - Weekly
  - Monthly
  - Infrequently
6. If you don't use toll roads frequently, why not?
  - Too expensive
  - Toll roads are not on my usual route/s
  - Not a significant time saving
  - Other (please specify) (*free text*)
7. How much, on average, are you paying in tolls per week?
  - a. Less than \$20

- b. Between \$20 and \$50
  - c. Between \$50 and \$75
  - d. Between \$75 and \$100
  - e. More than \$100
8. If you use toll roads to commute to or from work, how much time do you save, on average, using toll roads instead of driving on other roads?
- a. No time
  - b. Less than 10 minutes
  - c. 10-20 minutes
  - d. 20-30 minutes
  - e. 30-45 minutes
  - f. 45-60 minutes
  - g. More than 1 hour
9. Have you ever claimed any toll relief? If so, please describe your experience? (250 words max) *(free text)*
10. What are the impacts of toll costs on you? (500 words max) *(free text)*
11. Is there any other information you would like to share with members of this inquiry (500 words max) *(free text)*