

## **INQUIRY INTO ROAD TOLLING**

**Name:** Mr Andrew Quah

**Date received:** 27 February 2017

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The Director  
Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St.  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

27 February, 2017

## **Inquiry into Road Tolling**

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Andrew Quah, and I am currently a Senior Partner, and Head of Creative Arts, at the O-vation Group of Music and Entertainment Companies, and Founder and Creative Strategist at Creativism, a Creative Industries advocacy organisation. I write both in a professional capacity as an advocate of Western Sydney Creative Industries, and in a personal capacity as a life-long resident of Western Sydney. I write specifically in regards to tolling on current and proposed Western Sydney-based motorways, including the M5, M7, the proposed M9, the Western Sydney Airport route, and most especially the M4 and M4 East.

The creative and economic centre of Sydney is increasingly shifting West. According to the Greater Sydney Commission's own projections, there will be 1.6 million more people living west of the M7 by 2036. In recognition of Parramatta's role as the next focal point of the Sydney economy, the NSW Government has committed to moving the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (the MAAS) to Parramatta by 2022. Proposed projects like the Fleet Street Creative Precinct and the Camellia Technology Precinct will reshape Western Sydney as one of the great cultural and economic capitals of the world. As Sydney moves towards the three-city model advocated by the Greater Sydney Commission, its residents will increasingly rely on its public transport and road and maritime infrastructure.

The case for WestConnex has already been successfully argued – we must create the necessary road infrastructure in and out of Western Sydney to successfully realise its potential as the creative and manufacturing driver of the Sydney and NSW economy. In my advocacy work, I talk about developing Sydney, and Western Sydney in particular, as the Greatest place in the world to Create. I am incredibly enthused by the potential of developing infrastructure in Western Sydney and Regional NSW to support the Arts and Culture, and Technology sectors as drivers of employment and cultural enrichment as the Creative Capital of the world.

But despite the rosy picture of Western Sydney's future I advocate at Creativism, and the commitment to developing Western Sydney infrastructure this Government has made time and time again, the reality is that Western Sydney is defined primarily by its reality as the only part of Sydney that is open to those from a less-advantaged socio-economic background.

Placing the burden of cost for state and national significant road infrastructure solely on the residents of Western Sydney is unbearable – a new toll on the M4 motorway will apply an incredible cost onto what is currently the most trafficked route into Western Sydney. The choice for residents of Western Sydney will be to either significantly

increase our length of journey by shifting onto an already busy Parramatta Road, or to pay a substantial toll on a route that has, until now, either been free or subsidised. Western Sydney is the home of the economically least-advantaged residents of Sydney, and the burden of the proposed toll will be felt much stronger on Western Sydney residents than on the residents of other parts of Sydney. Put bluntly: **those who most need good access to quality road infrastructure are the very same who can least afford to use it.**

I argue that the dream of a vibrant Western Sydney will be crushed by exorbitant road tolls levied on the residents of Western Sydney. The M4 Western Sydney Motorway is not an optional corridor – all existing alternative routes are already at capacity. While those who use the M4 Motorway post-toll will enjoy faster journeys in and out of the city, those who seek to avoid the toll will instead face a much more congested Parramatta Road – one that is barely capable of carrying the traffic it already does. Western Sydney cannot realise its destiny to become the cultural and economic capital of Sydney if every major route into it is heavily tolled.

I argue that access to Parramatta and Greater Western Sydney is of the utmost importance to the economy of NSW – far too important for the burden of the cost of the M4 upgrade and extension to be borne solely by the residents of Western Sydney. The entire WestConnex is important, but this particular route is of such State and National significance that its cost should be borne equally by all the residents of NSW through taxes and levies. If this is not possible, then I ask that a cashback scheme for privately owned vehicles be considered, allowing operators of commercial vehicles to contribute fairly towards the upkeep of existing roads and the construction of new roads while relieving the burden on residents of Western Sydney of a substantial new tax on an existing route.

I also propose that a cap on state-wide tolls payable by privately-owned vehicles be applied. After a privately-owned vehicle has accumulated a set total of tolls (say, \$5.50 worth), that vehicle would then be able to travel on all Sydney motorways freely for a 24 hour period. The balance (on roads not owned by the State Government) would be borne equally by all NSW residents through taxes and levies. Commercial vehicles would continue to pay individual road tolls as they currently do, ensuring fair and equitable access for all road users.

There is no doubt that, after almost two decades of neglect, we need the new infrastructure being built by this Government. I encourage a complete re-think about how NSW road users pay for the essential infrastructure we need that doesn't place the burden on those who can least afford it.

Regards,

Andrew Quah