

**Submission
No 48**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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To: The Director of Public Accountability Committee
NSW Legislative Council

Parliamentary Inquiry into the Impacts of WestConnex

The whole procurement process for WestConnex highlights the appalling state of overall planning in NSW and the government's disregard for the wellbeing of the broader community in favour of support for big ticket projects that are poorly researched and favour the corporate community.

Planning for a major city needs to be holistic and integrated. This and previous governments have failed to achieve this, not helped by the proliferation of effectively independent 'planning' legislation and bodies that undermine any chance of achieving a coordinated long term strategic plan for the city and State. UrbanGrowth NSW, Greater Sydney Commission, the amalgamation of local government areas; projects of so called State Significance that bypass legitimate planning and environmental controls, all work against a coordinated strategic planning outcome.

Making major infrastructure commitments with huge financial outlays while highly significant long term planning studies for Sydney's future are in progress, i.e. the Greater Sydney Commissions strategic plans for the Greater Sydney Region; and the Future Transport 2056 strategy; is not good planning.

Committing to projects such as WestConnex without full and comprehensive cost benefit studies having been undertaken or detailed environmental impacts examined is not in the best interests of the community that our government is supposed to serve.

Assessing projects only in narrow terms of their immediate localised impact rather than on the overall impact of they will have on the wider environment i.e. for WestConnex, on the myriad feeder roads supporting the motorways is again poor planning practise. Omitting the cost of any such adjacent up-grades in the projected overall budget distort the financial viability of the overall project; as does ignoring the potential health costs of unfiltered ventilation stacks.

The State has an unfortunate financial history of infrastructure projects; typified by the Cross City Tunnel that through contract agreements favouring the developer/operator leave the community subsidising any funding shortfalls to the developers anticipated returns.

The extensive but tokenistic public participation for the project shows scant regard for the local residents' views and concerns. Noise, air pollution, depressed property values, general environmental amenity, and residents' physical and mental wellbeing are all treated as inconveniences.

The project shows an underlying disregard for public transport. The practice of indemnifying toll road operators against short falls in vehicle numbers both costing the public millions of dollars annually and provides significant disincentives to the development of effective public transport.

It is folly for the government to commit billions of dollars of public money for a project with poor odds for success. All work on the project should, at the very least, be put on hold until the many concerns and questions are reviewed and reassessed, many of which are outlined in greater detail in the submission presented by the Rozelle Against WestConnex. And that no further action be undertaken until the planning studies being undertaken by the Greater Sydney Commission and the Future Transport 2056 are completed and adopted. While the outcomes and recommendations of these studies are still to be determined there is no proper context with which to assess the necessity or credibility of the current WestConnex proposal.

Yours sincerely
Peter Murray
15 August 2018