

Submission
No 72

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX
PROJECT**

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Date Received: 7 August 2018

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To the Public Accountability Committee,

I am writing to submit my total dissatisfaction with the planning and execution of the Westconnex New M5. From day one when we were told about our homes being needed for the project it has been an absolute debacle, with little to no consultation, poor communication, random management with lack of direction, and a whole lot of passing the buck between the departments.

I will do my best to outline the issues we have faced at _____, St Peters, in no particular order:

1. Cost of the project- Over the entire project there has been multiple examples of poor management of tax payers money.
 - a) Starting with houses that were not needed for the project, however, they were purchased by the RMS. Whilst my home gets the road moving to within 4 metres of my front door, the houses purchased by the RMS have a large green space between them and the new road. If the houses were not needed why were they purchased?
 - b) On the corner of Campbell and May there was a green space, which has been a work site for the past 12 months, in that time I have seen the site dug up and filled back in over 10 times, I can't imagine the amount of money that was spent on this.
 - c) In the early stages of the project we had workers sitting in their cars outside our home for almost two days at times to save parking spaces, how much they were getting paid for an overnight shift on a Sunday to sit in a car? When it actually came to completing the required work, the parking space that was saved was often left unused, barricaded off or filled with workers vehicles.
 - d) Often, we were required to move out of our home for up to 3 days for work to continue overnight, whilst in the beginning in we appreciated the offer, it became a nuisance and often costly exercise for both ourselves and the project.
2. Noise

There has been a huge increase in noise on almost every day of the week.

 - a) The traffic has been moved one lane closer to our front door, we are now seeing and hearing cars speed past at up to 60kms per hour, 4 metres from my front door. Previously it was approximately 6 metres with a lane of parked cars in between, there is certainly a notable increase in traffic noise, which the RMS believes otherwise.
 - b) We have had noisy overnight work on many occasions, we have been woken by trucks with reversing beepers, and at other times we have been shaken awake by the vibrations.
 - c) For the past year we have had a worker's yard and construction zone directly across from our homes, all day and night we have noise coming from this.
 - d) After the RMS decided to move the traffic closer to our home, the noise abatement team have decided that we would not be impacted by higher noise levels, we have asked them to explain how this could be possible, they have replied that they expect traffic to levels to decrease on the road. I'm not sure I can make sense that another lane would be needed in the front of my house if the traffic is to decrease, and also does bringing traffic closer to a home make it quieter.
3. Traffic Disruptions
 - a) Throughout the project there has been major traffic disruptions on weekly basis.
 - b) What seems to be inexperienced traffic controllers controlling traffic on a Saturday, making normally 5 min journeys sometimes take up to an hour. Most recently last weekend from Enmore to St Peters, it took one hour due to the traffic changes at the May St Intersection. This same day, I witnessed a bus having to do a 5 point turn to get from Unwin's Bridge Road to Bedwin Street, that is normally a simple left turn.

- c) Previous to that approximately 4 weeks ago, again the entire May St intersection was a mess, the controllers were only permitting one direction of traffic at a time, this impacted the traffic all the way to Sydney Park road and in the other direction Tempe.
- d) Every day I return home to have a possible argument with a worker about where I can park, this has been like this since last year when they installed a concrete block along one side of May Street for absolutely no reason at all. Parking for up to 7 cars was removed for 6 months for no reason at all, no work was completed in the barricaded area during that entire time. I took a photo many of the days when I saw nothing was being done, it was just a permanent inconvenience to locals. The project also removed this parking away without proper notification or providing an alternative until we had to make an official complaint, I think you'll find that they will be fined from the government body who regulates these projects.

4. Lack of Consultation

From the get go the consultation process has been inadequate and full of maybes and possibilities, with no one that can give a complete answer.

- a) When being briefed about our homes being in the reservation area and whether they would be needed for the project, there was a lack of knowledge about the project and the delivery of the news left many questions unanswered due to the lack of information on hand with the RMS representative. Not until a year after did we find out that our home was 'not needed at this point' still not a confirmation that our home would stay, and still to this day they cannot fully release our home until 2020. Due to the uncertainty and stress in the first few months, my partner developed shingles from being run down and stressed over losing our home.
- b) The New M5 team held a meeting for local residents to show us plans of what would happen to our local streets before the work had started in our area. When questioned about the removal of parking on our street (31 spaces) they said at the time that the plans were not finalised and that we could talk about that later before the detailed planning was complete.
- c) Fast forward a few months and the work starts around us and we find out that the parking will be removed and there is no plan to replace any of the 31 spaces. This includes moving the road closer to our homes, without no consultation about such a huge change that would affect our homes and our daily lives, again we had been forgotten.

5. Poor Planning

- a) Our homes are located just inside the project area alongside some commercial buildings, throughout the project my neighbours and I feel like we have been overlooked in many ways. An excellent example of this is the noise abatement, originally our homes were not even considered for treatment, you can see this in the original EIS, even though we were inside the project area and obviously affected by noise. Our homes now back directly on to _____, since the project removal of two homes behind us, more importantly is that another lane of traffic is to be added to the front of our house, all without any consultation or any thought about the people living here.
- b) The removal of parking on May St to make an additional lane close to the May St Intersection, discredits the EIS and the continuous communication that the passing traffic is to reduce after the project is complete. If this is true then why is an additional lane needed, and why would parking need to be removed from a street that is going to become quieter. Either the planners aren't talking to the traffic scientists or it's just another error that the RMS is trying to hide.

6. Communication

- a) Often communication of works is sent out on a Friday for works happening that weekend, giving us little to no notice. The information can be confusing when it is sent out and often all bundled into one email or letterbox drop, I often believe that is the tactic.
- b) On occasion, we have been asked to move out of our home and given less than a week's notice.
- c) Response to emails and complaints have been mixed, if it's something more than a simple acknowledgment response it can take up to 4 months, I am still waiting for a response from the RMS on my letter from April this year. Other responses I have received have been a standard response with intent to answer the questions I have raised in my correspondence, this leave us feeling very frustrated with so many unanswered questions.
- d) At this point I am receiving at least 2 letter box drops a week, from either WestConnex or the Sydney Metro, you can imagine the anxiety and stress that you feel when you open the letter box to see what this week has install for us, it certainly is taking a toll on our mental wellbeing.

7. Damages

- a) Our home has been damaged by the constant works carried out around us. The walls in our home have cracked, bathroom tiles have cracks, our fence has fallen down at the front, and when work was completed inside my yard it was not restored to it's original concrete grounding. This now leaves an escape option for my dog who can now dig under the fence since the concrete grounding has been removed.
- b) The financial damage this project has had on our lives and home is immeasurable, there is no possible way we could sell our home right now and get the market value it held before the start of construction. The place next door has been up for rent for 4 weeks with no interest at all.
- c) Our mental wellbeing has also taken a toll, you can't imagine what it's like to come home to constant stressors around you, whether it be people beeping their horns due to poor traffic management, a thick layer of dust all over your home just after your spent the day cleaning, constant noise from the construction, your car covered in dirt, your dog escaping or just another notification in your letterbox, it really changes your mood and the environment at home.

At the end of all this, it feels like our community are the ones bearing the real cost of this project, and it comes down to poor planning, lack of consultation and mismanagement. The RMS should give us the residents fair treatment in all, let us be heard and take onboard some of our feedback, that's what consultation is.

A resident who is tired and worn down.