

Submission
No 83

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX
PROJECT**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

West Connex And Western Harbour Tunnel - Submission

The case for Westconnex has veered substantially from the original mission, to get trucks off Parramatta Road and to the airport. That object has not been achieved. Now what we have is an entity which is tunnelling for tunnelling's sake, and every design change seems designed to suck in more vehicles to plump up the entity's potential revenues, making it an easier sale prospect for the state government. This is no way to conduct urban planning. The public transport needs of western Sydney should have been addressed long before this project got underway. Western Harbour Tunnel The proposed tunnel has again, been unleashed with no business case outlined for it. There are almost no details publicly available about its construction or the impact on residents from Birchgrove to Waverton. This includes the impact of tunnelling under the suburbs from Rozelle through to the Beaches Link. There is also no business case for the Beaches Link that has been put into the public arena.

The impact of the tunnel on the health of the harbour will be severe and will reverse the progress made in recent decades to return the marine environment of the harbour to health. Documents leaked to the ABC and the SMH suggest that a massive 100,000 cubic metres of sediment will have to be excavated for the tunnel and a further 480,000 cubic meters for the Glebe Island treatment works. These volumes are larger than all the combined sediment excavation and remediation works that have been completed in Sydney Harbour. No information has been made available as to the level of contamination of the sediment in the stretch of harbour where the tunnel construction is mooted. It is almost certain that sediment in Balls Head Bay, near the old Waverton gasworks, will contain similar contaminants to those found near other old gasworks. The Shell terminal at Greenwich will have contributed other dangerous chemicals. In short, these areas of the harbour sediment are likely to contain heavy metals, petroleum hydrocarbons, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, and the highly toxic components of anti fouling paints which are designed to kill off marine biota, as well as organochlorine pesticides. In addition the naturally occurring acid sulfate soils of the harbour sediment can be expected, when exposed to the atmosphere, to generate rotten egg gas which is both toxic and very malodorous for residents. Government agencies have previously ruled that there can be severe environmental risk from acid sulfate sediments if they are disturbed by excavation.

The excavation methods of contaminated sediment proposed for the Tunnel share the problem that large volumes of water will be exposed to the sediment and cannot be left to re-enter the harbour. But the challenge is likely to overwhelm any conventional attempts at water treatment. Attempts to treat the sediment are likely to run into many tens of millions of dollars. Overall the excavation of contaminated sediment for the construction of the WHT will not deliver an environmentally acceptable solution, will generate a high risk of contamination of harbour waters, will result in unacceptable volumes of contaminated sediment possibly being redirected to landfill, and will have an unacceptable impact on residents over a wide area from vessel and truck movements and 24/7 operations. Under no circumstances should local parkland on the harbour be taken over for sediment treatment and storage, or staging areas for tunnel construction.

Truly independent expert advice in this area should be sought by the committee. Not advice from consultants already on the payroll in connection with this project.

Thanks