

**Submission
No 94**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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To the Director
Standing Committee on Public Accountability
Parliament House
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PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACTS OF WESTCONNEX

I write to protest the impacts of Westconnex on my and my family's health, and the destruction of my community, heritage and the City of Sydney using the terms of reference given by the Public Accountability Committee

Terms of reference

1. The adequacy of the business case for the Westconnex project

The business case for this project is inaccurate and misleading and has not been amended to revisions including the extra kilometres of tunnel and the extra infrastructure to link to future proposed projects.

With the removal of the Camperdown portal, traffic modeling to the St Peters interchange is inaccurate and therefore the predictions of usage of Westconnex are also inaccurate.

Note the INDEPENDENT report commissioned by City of Sydney is highly critical of the Westconnex business case assumptions.

Note also that a Citigroup report also found traffic modeling of Westconnex overestimated. It found many deficiencies

and inaccuracies in the business case predictions and that the cost benefit ratio was unreliable.

And again it is outrageous that the NSW government instructed transport officials to ignore public transport alternatives to motorways. The government claims it wants Sydney to be a world class city and yet every other such city has invested in public transport over motorways for decades!!!

2.The cost of Westconnex

Previous toll road projects such as Lane Cove Tunnel and Cross City Tunnel have overestimated travel time savings and drivers use and they have become financial disasters

Official estimates for Westconnex do not include:

- i. the cost of compulsory land and property acquisitions
- ii. the cost of legal challenges to these
- iii. the environmental and health impacts of increased car usage with Westconnex and the pollution resulting from its construction. I live in the south end of King St Newtown/ St Peters and the air and noise pollution has now been horrendous for years. Health research studies indicate this can have life time health impacts

3. The Governance and structure of the Westconnex project

There is no proper transparency and accountability regarding crucial information on Westconnex. It is outrageous that the Sydney Motor Corporation is a private company which now has the responsibility for the largest transport infrastructure project in Australia and thus operates outside RMS and the expertise of NSW Transport.

Crucial information such as expenditure, tenders and contracts are no longer accessible to the public via freedom of information. How can this be as we witness our communities and indeed our city trashed!!!

4. The compulsory acquisition of property

The impact on individuals and communities has been devastating. The social impact has been and will continue to be enormous. I believe that most of those people whose homes and businesses have been compulsorily acquired will never recover.

There has not been proper recompense for properties so that in many cases people who have lived in an area for decades cannot continue there thus not only losing their home but all their social support.

The Russell Review recommended changes to this compulsory acquisition including extra compensation and this review was CONCEALED from the public FOR 2 1/2 YEARS. Outrageous.

And the loss of heritage is so unacceptable.

5. Recommendations from the Audit Office of NSW and the Australian National Audit Office on Westconnex

Despite consistent early advice from the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development and Infrastructure Australia that the project should not be recommended for federal funding it was. The report showed the government bypassed governance structures and pushed through a \$2 billion, 34 year concessional loan and the public's interest was not properly represented

6. The extent to which the project is meeting the original goals set out in 2012.

Westconnex began as a proposal to provide a road link from Western Sydney to Port Botany and Mascot airport. This was a legitimate need. However in the years since 2012 there have been many changes, additions and tolls

added and now the current proposal does NOT include a link to Port Botany and Mascot.

There has been massive destruction of homes, businesses, green spaces, heritage and morale. For what? Urban amenity and local traffic conditions will not improve and in fact have been and will be much worsened

Apparently the Sydney Gateway project has been removed and this would have achieved its original purpose. Along with all the other changes this clearly indicates the project lacks any proper process and planning.

The lack of proper planning and process for the M4-M5, Link [which by its own description is only an indicative plan] at the most complex and expensive stage of Westconnex, is so appalling

7. The cost of the project against its current valuation as determined through the sale of the Sydney Motor Corporation and whether it represents a good investment for NSW taxpayers

Westconnex does not represent a good investment for NSW taxpayers because the whole premise of the NSW Governments current proposal- that Westconnex will reduce congestion and decrease travel time for people of Western Sydney- is false. The Governments own business case shows

- i. Westconnex will save only 5 minutes for most users
- ii. Public transport, mostly, will be faster
- iii. It will reach capacity in 8 years

8. HEALTH IMPACTS

Westconnex has already in the construction stage and will in the future ,if it is finished, impact negatively on the health and wellbeing of people of the Inner West .

Increased toxic pollution levels near the proposed unfiltered stacks near residential areas, schools and parks cause very significant health risks. Particulate matter affects more people than any other pollutant and

the most health damaging particles are those with a diameter of 10 microns or less which can penetrate deep inside the lungs. And this is the plan for the very high densely populated Inner west suburbs as a result of Westconnex

This project will also lock Western Sydney residents into nonactive transport of long commutes which will have negative health impacts for generations of people. Additionally the health impacts of long durations in unfiltered tunnels is totally unacceptable. Science has established these known health impacts.

9. Climate change risks

The climate impacts of large scale unsustainable infrastructure such as Westconnex are also so unacceptable. Clean efficient public transport is the answer

My personal story is that I have a daughter who lives in Enmore, who has an auto-immune disease and since the start of construction of Westconnex she has been constantly ill picking up one infection after another. This was not the case before all the pollution descended upon us from this filthy, poorly planned and managed project.

She has a little boy at St Peters preschool who has also been constantly ill since Westconnex began. He has had pneumonia twice and many colds and ear infections. This did not happen before the start of this project

I live in south Newtown and walk every day in Sydney Park which is opposite the St Peters Interchange site. I have not had asthma since a child but I am on the verge all the time now, often having difficulty breathing with sore throats, shortage of breath, sinus infections and bleeding, more headaches etc.

This will not improve with the completion of this dirty ill conceived project as we will then have to contend with unfiltered stacks and appalling levels of car traffic.

I am also appalled at the disgusting behavior of Westconnex who have given grants to St Peters school and preschool and other affected schools on the proviso they do not mention Westconnex. These poor schools should be speaking up against all the health and safety risks to our children but they have been so compromised they cannot or do not.

**Glenys Waddell
Retired psychologist**

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