Submission No 106

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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- The WestConnex project has lacked both strategic justification and the detail to enable its impact to be properly evaluated.
- The WestConnex business case failed to adequately consider the public transport alternatives to easing Sydney traffic issues, alternatives which are likely to be more cost effective, less polluting and which reduce the number of cars on the road rather than increase induced demand. Better use of existing road infrastructure should also have been considered as a sensible alternative.
- The low level of governance and oversight of the WestConnex project is unacceptable. The poor governance of Sydney's troubled light rail project is a strong example of the NSW State Government's weak oversight of infrastructure projects.
- There is no justification for the WestConnex project being considered in isolation to other toll road projects, such as the Western Harbour Tunnel, the Beaches Link, the F6 and Sydney Gateway. The reason for this must be publicly explained by the State Government, otherwise the community is entitled to assume that the Government has underhand, unsound reasons for treating projects separately.
- The cumulative impact of other toll road projects and projects such as the Sydney West Metro must be taken into account to understand the real impact of WestConnex on the Inner West. It is disingenuous not to do so.
- The Rozelle Interchange component of WestConnex is purely a concept. This component could therefore not validly have been approved in the WestConnex business case or the EIS when even experts doubt it could be built. If a new concept is developed for the Interchange, residents need to be given the opportunity to raise any objections.
- The Rozelle Interchange involves the construction of four exhaust stacks in a residential area. One exhaust stack in an area is concerning enough but four –all unfiltered –in one area is unconscionable. The health risks from emissions in excess of 50 tonnes of carcinogenic material each year are obvious. The State Government must explain why it is acceptable to build four stacks in a non-Government electorate but such a proposal would never be entertained if Rozelle and adjacent areas were located in Government held seats.
- Significant areas affected by WestConnex are heritage areas. The decimation of these areas can already be seen and no further destruction should be allowed. Heritage areas and heritage houses should be preserved, not destroyed. Due to their age, many of the houses affected by WestConnex are fragile and not build on firm foundations. Noise, vibrations and tunnelling therefore has a significant impact on these types of properties. It is doubtful that property owners have been (or will be) properly compensated.

- The WestConnex business case fails to prove that the negative impacts of the project - including years of disruption, noise, unacceptable and permanent increases in pollution, loss of business, loss of heritage in whole communities, loss of property values - outweigh the perceived benefits.

- The lack of transparency and changing justifications for WestConnex show that it is a project looking for a cause, and not a project servicing a clear need.