

**Submission  
No 115**

## **INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT**

**Organisation:** Newtown Residents Against WestConnex

**Date Received:** 27 August 2018

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**Name:** Ms Marilyn Fairskye

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Inquiry into the impact of the WestConnex Project

We make this submission to the above inquiry on behalf of Newtown Residents Against WestConnex. We welcome the inquiry as we have increasing concerns about many aspects of the WestConnex Project and its lack of public accountability.

Key concerns are:

***(a) The adequacy of the business case for the WestConnex project, including the cost-benefit ratio.***

- There have been many significant and ad hoc changes to the scope of the project through 2016 that include extra kilometres of tunnels, changes to tunnel alignment, additional ramp structures and removal of the portals in Camperdown.
- The original plan for roads from the west to the port area appears to have been abandoned. None of the proposed roads go anywhere near the port.

The traffic modelling that decisions have been based on has not been amended to reflect these changes, nor have the effects on the St Peters Interchange been considered, which means the current traffic modelling is inaccurate. It follows that the business case predictions and cost benefit ratio are also incorrect.

**Implications for local residents**

- Fears around quality control and public safety connected to the construction of the tunnels that will run under our houses, once the sale of Sydney Motorway Corporation goes through and the new owners seek to minimize profit losses due to the original incorrect modelling.

- Environmental and health impacts due to increased traffic congestion from the St Peters Interchange on surface roads such as King Street and narrow densely populated side streets.

***(j) any other related matter***

***a) Damage to homes and heritage items***

We are very concerned about Sydney Motorway Corporation's (SMC) plans regarding the M4-M5 Link and the effects on Newtown and Camperdown homes and heritage structures near the proposed tunnel construction. Many houses were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in this heritage listed area, which already suffers from the unstable earth and environment. The exact tunnel route has not been finalised, and to date residents have only had access to 'indicative' plans. The EIS had only a single, minimum reference to heritage items located above the indicative tunnel corridor that merely suggested they were unlikely to be impacted. We have repeatedly asked and failed to receive adequate answers from Sydney Motorway Corporation about the following:

- **Dilapidation reports**

SMC has said that affected properties within 50 metres of the construction sites for the tunnels and for 50 metres either side of tunnel corridors will be offered dilapidation reports. Will the pre- and post-construction condition reporting for affected properties be conducted by independent assessors? We need truly independent assessments of our properties before, immediately after construction works and three years on, to allow time for the effects of subsidence to show. Engineers experienced in this area have told us that subsidence is the gravest threat to our properties - and the most difficult to prove. WestConnex continues to offer only condition reports before and immediately after construction, thereby refusing to address this vital issue.

- **A transparent compensation process**

We have not been provided with clarification of compensation processes and timelines for properties damaged during construction *and after* (subsidence). Residents will be doubly disadvantaged if heritage and other buildings are damaged and they have to spend months or years trying to establish fault before any redress can be provided. Residents will be further disadvantaged if they find that their claim has been voided because it falls outside of the approved timeframe for damage to be identified and a claim lodged.

- **Vibration monitoring**

We call for independent real time community-accessible vibration monitors along the path of both tunnels. Real time Internet access for the community or its representatives to independent vibration monitoring along the tunnel route would allow for potentially dangerous spikes in vibrations to be addressed

immediately instead of being lost in aggregated reports that are monitored after the event, and after damage to structures that could have been prevented has been set in motion. Independent monitoring is critical if community confidence in the monitoring process is to be maintained.

- **Geotechnical studies**

Why has SMC refused to provide us with a copy of report from the geotechnical studies they conducted in our neighbourhood? We want to know what the below-ground conditions are for the tunneling. This is particularly significant for understanding the risk posed to the many heritage structures in Newtown. We received advice from tunneling engineer Mr. Noel Childs that the blasting, unless very carefully managed, will introduce short and longer-term risks to the fragile heritage structures.

**b) Sale of Sydney Motorway Corporation**

**Tunnel route**

- Is it true that the private construction company who wins the contract to deliver Stage 3 will make the final decision on the route of the tunnels, and will not be obliged to tell the public, including the people whose homes it will go under, where it is?
- We have seen graphic images of damage to people's homes caused by construction on the M4 and M5. If the government sells off WestConnex, who will be responsible for damage? How will homeowners be able to prove damage is caused by construction if we are not even told where the tunnels are going?
- Is it true the community will have no opportunity to comment on the final design?

**c) Clearways on King Street**

The decision not to consider in the EIS the issue of clearways on King St as one means of coping with massively increased traffic flows as a result of WestConnex has left potentially significant impacts to parking, cyclists, local streetscape, amenity and the local economy, including small businesses, tourism etc., as well as wider traffic flows unresolved. The community wants more than empty assurances that there are "no current plans" for *additional* clearways on King St.

Yours sincerely,



Marilyn Fairskye

(for Newtown Residents Against WestConnex)