

**Submission
No 156**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

Name: Ms Carolyn Allen

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NSW Legislative Council

Inquiry into the impact of the WestConnex Project

Dear members

I like to comment on the WestConnex project but at the outset say that the terms of reference are very limited and do not address environmental & sustainability factors at all.

- (a) The business case which has been made public is completely inadequate as there has been no real cost-benefit analysis. Costs have been underestimated illustrated by continuing upward adjustments. Benefits have not been shown. It would seem there may be short term benefits for those who wish to live on a large block of land in outer suburbs & work in the inner city. There has been no analysis of the enormous social costs to those who already live in inner city suburbs who are having their whole neighbourhoods destroyed. It is one thing to do a business case for a single engineering project but this is pointless unless alternatives are studied & cost benefit analysis is done on all alternatives. The benefits of an improved and extended public transport system has not been included. The business case cannot be adequate when it would seem that this project & other proposed projects & their interrelationships have not been fully planned, eg we have had numerous changes to what will happen at White Bay/ Rozelle interchange with the various other proposals that will impact on this area. We just get a new 'sketch' idea of what will happen each time.
- (b) The cost of the WestConnex project has been seriously underestimated illustrated by the continual upward projections. A major problem is that the project does not address the original aims (relating to connecting the airport & Port Botany) & has been commenced without a fully developed plan being available to the public & therefore transparent. The relationship of this project to other the road infrastructure projects of which it is clearly part, is also not transparent.
- (c) The governance structure of the project also lacks transparency, as a member of the public I am not able to adequately address this issue. Do any of these agencies have the public & public transport as a priority? The privatisation of parts of the project means there are problems of possible corruption & the public of NSW will bear the cost. If commuters were removed from the roads there would be no need for additional major road infrastructure & the environmental impacts would be greatly reduced.
- (d) The compulsory acquisition of property for the project has had an enormous impact on our neighbourhoods. It has caused considerable dislocation, distress, health problems & economic loss. Reports indicate that owners of compulsorily acquired properties have been paid as little as 60% of the market value of their homes. It is my view that if property does need to be acquired for the public good, people should receive more than the true market value of their property, they must be paid compensation as well. As a tax payer I would want to know that citizens are properly compensated for their sacrifice. The breakdown in community ties is great in terms of community, social and school networks. The costs & additional workloads for local councils has also not been considered. These costs need to be considered in any cost – benefit analysis.
- (e) I believe the Audit Office said that the project should not go ahead until the business cases are thoroughly revisited for Stages 2 and 3.
- (f) The project clearly does not meet the original goals of the project. These include connectivity to the ports and the airport. On this criteria alone the project is a complete failure.

- (g) It would seem that the WestConnex and other toll road projects including the Sydney Gateway, Western Harbour Tunnel, F6 and Beaches Link are just one big project, but one that has not been clearly thought out and fully planned before commencement. It was the NSW Government's duty to fully inform the public of such a big interconnected project. The use of private companies and entering into commercial in-confidence agreements on parts of such a project clearly puts future Governments at a great disadvantage and leaves the public "in the dark". Detail has been hidden from the public. I have been to several community "information sessions" which have shown very little apart from diagrammatic representations & have been a complete sham. There has been no response to continued calls from the public to consider that an extended public transport system is required to create a better and more sustainable transport network in Sydney.
- (h) They are not separate projects so I believe this was only done for commercial reasons to benefit private corporations.
- (i) The sale to the Sydney Motorway Corporation will certainly not represent a good investment for NSW taxpayers and is clearly not in the public interest. Any contract, such as the one for the Eastern Distributor, that precludes the Government, or any operator, from providing an alternate or competing transport corridor, is also definitely not in the public interest. Because of the secrecy surrounding the Project it is impossible to ascertain the extent of taxpayer liability, but one thing is certain, the current & future tax payers will pay & the private corporation will profit.
- (j) Of enormous concern to me is the blatant refusal by the RMS to filter the proposed exhaust stacks. This decision will cause premature morbidity, ranging from diabetes to cancer. Scientists & the medical profession say there no safe level of air pollution. No level is 'acceptable'. The 4 proposed stacks in Rozelle will easily emit in excess of 50 tonnes of particulate matter annually, based on RMS figures for the M5 East exhaust stack. The cost to the community in financial terms is impossible to quantify but could easily run into billions. As pollution levels rise deaths and hospitalisations rise too. The proposed exhaust stacks must include particulate filtration of the highest level technically possible. All exhaust stacks on all roads should do this. A thorough cost-benefit analysis that takes into account the health effects due to increased exposure should have been included in the business case. People living within 500 metres of heavily affected areas have demonstrably shorter lives, much higher incidences of chronic lung conditions and higher levels of cardiovascular diseases. The stacks in Rozelle are of particularly serious concern as they are in a residential area next to a large number of proposed playing fields. The Rozelle interchange proposes an unprecedented concentration of four stacks, in two valleys, adjacent to densely populated suburbs.

Impact on property and residential amenity is of great concern to me. Residents of these areas have mostly paid considerable sums to live close to the city as that is our priority. We have not prioritised a large home with spacious grounds. We are living sustainably in smaller homes at the higher densities required for the future & now we are having the communities & spaces we have created vandalised so others can get into the city in their car. Public transport needs to be provided for all commuters.

There will be increased traffic on local roads due to rat running & this will seriously impact on residential amenity. The government forced amalgamation on Leichhardt, Ashfield & Marrickville Councils & now these projects are going ahead and creating a nightmare of getting around our Inner West Council area. The construction of four unfiltered stacks in

Rozelle will impact on residential property values, as well as on the desirability of the White Bay region and adjoining suburbs.

The promised open space at St Peters & Rozelle for active recreation is also problematic. That at St Peters from the visuals made public seems to have no access. What sort of amenity will these provide polluted by the adjacent exhaust stacks?

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Allen