

**Submission
No 166**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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Submission to the Inquiry into the Impact of the WestConnex Project
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I believe that the process regarding the development of the Westconnex project has been inadequate, opaque and potentially corrupt. There are many issues that would raise these concerns, however I will focus on one issue which I think will expose broader inadequacies in the project. Specifically, I believe that the process to gather and publish data on Biodiversity regarding the region of Sydney Park in St Peters affected by the New M5, especially the development of the M5 interchange. When processes to correctly analyse biodiversity are not followed, it will lead to an incorrect evaluation of the cost of the project and raises broader questions of what processes were not followed, or followed transparently, in regards to the WestConnex project.

The data on biodiversity was gathered for the New M5 EIS over 12 days (EIS Chapter 21). Over April 13-14 the City of Sydney ran a Bioblitz which included the collection of scientific data regarding the flora and fauna of the area. Over the bioblitz 130 species were identified, including the threatened Eastern Bent-winged Bat (*Miniopterus fuliginosus*).

[https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?](https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?project_id=18245&place_id=any&verifiable=any&captive=any&view=species)

[project_id=18245&place_id=any&verifiable=any&captive=any&view=species](https://www.inaturalist.org/observations?project_id=18245&place_id=any&verifiable=any&captive=any&view=species)

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspeciesapp/profile.aspx?id=10534>

1. What would be the cost of mitigation strategies related the protection or conservation of the species identified by the Bioblitz program, including the Eastern Bent-winged Bat. Would the strategies be similar to the strategies identified regarding the Green and Golden Bell Frog?
2. Can the contractors explain why the City of Sydney Bioblitz volunteers managed to identify 130 species over one weekend, including some that the EIS does not include?
3. Do the contractors and the department of planning believe that their processes reflect best practice?
4. How were the staff instructed to collect flora and fauna information? Did any have recent or contemporaneous roles relating to WestConnex construction contracts?
5. Issues of Biodiversity are included in the EIS, are they included in the cost benefit ratio? If so, what is the cost of damaging the population of threatened species or the loss of habitat?

Without the above questions being adequately answered we do not know if the process to gather data and present the data for the EIS was appropriately rigorous or future costs related to the conservation of species that the EIS failed to identify will be carried by the people of NSW because of the failure to identify them in a timely manner.

In addition to the questions regarding the Stage 2 EIS project and Sydney Park biodiversity, there are also the following questions which I believe are pertinent to the Inquiry and there would be a benefit to the public if these questions were resolved and publicised.

1. Have the traffic numbers across the different sections of the project been revised between 2014 and 2018? If so, why and by who? What factors were taken into consideration when reevaluating traffic volume?
2. How have human health impacts been evaluated regarding the cost-benefit ratio of the project?
 1. What is the cost of air pollution impact on human health calculated as?