

**Submission
No 167**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

Name: Ms Sallie Beaumont

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Sallie Beaumont

29/08/18

**Attn: The Director of Public Accountability Committee
NSW Legislative Council
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

Re: Inquiry into the Impacts of the WestConnex Project

Dear Committee Members,

I applaud the decision to call a Parliamentary Inquiry into the impacts of the WestConnex project — a project that I consider to be enormously detrimental in so many ways — and I present my submission herewith.

My concerns are threefold: the environmental impact; community impact; and cost impact. **I submit that due diligence and proper risk assessment have not taken place with respect to *any* of these impacts, and that a comprehensive cost assessment of these negative impacts was never done, let alone factored into the overall business case.**

As such, my concerns speak to the Inquiry's terms of reference a) to d) and to clause j). I will address each one in turn.

1. I am extremely concerned that the smoke stacks planned for stage 3 of this project will not be filtered and will cause significant pollution and present an enormous health risk to the Inner West community, not to mention an awful eyesore at 35 metres tall. These stacks will pump toxic fumes across Rozelle and Lilyfield, effectively turning our neighbourhoods into the exhaust pipe of Sydney. I am sure that none of the Members of Parliament who approved Stage 3 of the WestConnex project lives anywhere near the proposed sites for these appalling smoke stacks. The tiny unseen particles of pollution will do untold damage to all of us living within a few miles radius as we are forced to breathe in this deadly cocktail. The very young and the very old will be at particular risk. It's a disgrace that these giant smoke stacks can be considered plausible options in the middle of neighbourhoods. To then end up with four in close proximity that are not even filtered seems to be of the highest negligence and a complete disregard for the health of the local residents. In total 29 of these smoke stacks are planned for the entirety of the project, blighting

Sydney's landscape with these concrete monstrosities and billowing fumes across a multitude of suburbs.

No independent study of the health impacts of unfiltered stacks on the particularly unfavourable terrain of Rozelle Goods Yards has been done. **I submit that the costs of the overall project would increase again if proper health assessments were carried out and potential health impacts properly costed.**

2. The impact on the community as the roads and tunnels are built is enormous. We have already heard horror stories of people being forced out of their homes while the tunnelling is going ahead due to the loud noise and vibrations — not to mention the forced acquisition of properties. My home in Lilyfield, according to the plans for Stage 3, will also have a tunnel passing beneath it which is causing me great angst. The dust and the noise from the project construction is set to continue for years to come and will cause health issues and enormous disruption to the lives of local residents. The Rozelle Interchange is a frightening prospect. Even if — according to the latest reports — the Interchange will be mainly underground, there will of course be above ground structures at the dive sites. Houses will disappear on Victoria Road to make way for the complicated construction. To have a mega spaghetti junction tear through the heart of the neighbourhood will completely change the character and feel of what to date has been considered a village. To then learn that the approval for stage 3 was done in secrecy and only revealed to the public ten days after signing it into existence is doubly galling since there is huge opposition but none of this was taken into consideration. The kind of vision for Sydney that has been formed behind closed doors does not reflect that of the wider community and it is so frustrating knowing that our desire for clean, green public transport rather than yet more congested roads is being thwarted by government officials and company directors with their vested interests.

If the true costs to mental health, physical health, torn-apart communities, lost productivity in work, schooling and other education, and the effects of such were really taken into consideration as a result of drilling and acquisition disruptions, I submit that the final cost of the project would blow out again and render the business case even more non-existent than it already is.

3. The cost of this project has spiraled out of control and independent analysis puts the final costs of the construction work close to \$45 billion which is a far cry from the \$16.8 billion touted by the government at the start. With so much money being pumped into building these roads and tunnels to potentially save only a few minutes of travel time, one can only wonder at the better use of this funding if it had been allocated to public transport. Not only would this have been a win for the environment but also for the millions of residents who rely on public transport to get around. I totally agree with Clover Moore's assessment of the WestConnex project that it is "an unmitigated disaster for our global city." At the end of the day, this is a motorway project that puts corporations and profits first while giving scant attention to the communities that are being literally torn apart. It is scandalous that

WestConnex has been given the go ahead to build something with such negative consequences for Sydney and yet with so little benefits.

Public transport versus WestConnex was never submitted to an appropriate cost/benefit analysis. The Sydney Morning Herald ran an article on 10 April 2017 stating that “The NSW government has been instructing transport officials to ignore public transport alternatives to motorway projects, according to explosive internal documents obtained by Fairfax Media.” From a Memo dated 26 September 2016, obtained by SMH under the Government Information (Public Access) Act, and headed “Failure in Critical Options Analysis”, we learn that “the cabinet directive not to consider rail as an alternative is inconsistent with government principles and guidelines” and that the Memo clearly states that this “represents a fundamental shortfall in Transport for NSW meeting its responsibilities in achieving value for the state's taxpayers”.
<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/f6-planners-told-to-ignore-public-transport-build-roads-documents-show-20170407-gvqbon.html>

I submit that due diligence wasn't followed and the business case for the Westconnex motorway project never soundly established.

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to present my objections to and concerns about this monstrosity of a motorway project and the absence of proper processes of risk assessment, costing and due diligence. I trust that as you look deeper into the issues surrounding the financing and the lack of transparency around the awarding of contracts that have been reported in the press that you will come to the same conclusion as millions of Sydney residents: this project should never have been given the green light, it's a waste of money, it's a disaster for both the environment and local communities, and stages 3 and 4 should not be allowed to go ahead.

Yours Sincerely

Sallie Beaumont