

**Submission
No 187**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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Submission: Inquiry into the impacts of the WestConnex project

Our community wants and needs world class public transport, not more polluting toll roads.

Global experience of major toll road construction has demonstrated conclusively that projects like WestConnex increase air pollution, encourage more car use, fleece road users with exorbitant tolls and eventually fill the increased road capacity they create.

WestConnex is shaping up as the most expensive road project in the world but it won't solve Sydney's congestion problem. I oppose this project because:

- The **business case** does not properly consider alternatives such as public transport and demand management.
- The **budget** is now \$16.8 billion – a 68% increase on the original estimate.
- A project of this scale, using taxpayers funds, should be subject to rigorous assessment but both the NSW Auditor-General and Infrastructure Australia have criticised the **governance** of this project.
- Hundreds of homes, businesses and parklands will be **compulsorily acquired**.
- It is diverting funding from **public transport** which is desperately needed across Sydney.
- WestConnex will turn Rozelle into a dumping ground for toxic exhaust fumes with three unfiltered **exhaust stacks** at the Rozelle Rail Yards and one at Victoria Road at Iron Cove Bridge just metres from homes and a primary school.

WestCONnex is a waste of money. It has been reported that the state government directed transport officials to ignore the cheaper, faster and more effective public transport alternatives. Every new section of freeway induces more people to travel by car; they end up on a road to a bigger traffic jam which they encounter when they get closer to their destination. Westconnex will only save motorists less than 5 minutes on average per trip - that's around \$10 billion for each minute saved!

Successive governments have neglected maintaining our public transport networks and have failed to invest in building enough new public transport, compared with the amount of taxpayer dollars they continue investing in building toll roads, inducing more cars onto our roads and appeasing the roads lobby.

Westconnex is a giant leap backwards to the 1950s; absolute madness when we have already passed the period of peak oil and we face an uncertain future re the effects of rising greenhouse gases. Westconnex is not a solution to the problem of transporting large numbers of people. Building more freeways is not a good idea in view of Peak Oil and the Greenhouse Effect. In "The Coming Oil Crisis" (1988) C J Campbell made the case that Peak Oil would happen about 2010; the emerging crisis with Global Warming has been widely reported. The \$50 billion to be wasted on Westconnex and associated local road work should be spent on public transport. It is preferable that walking, cycling and public transport should be funded instead of directing money into building more freeways.

Leigh Howlett