

**Submission  
No 188**

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX  
PROJECT**

**Name:** Mr Patrick McNamara

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## **Submission to the Parliamentary Enquiry into the impact of the WestConnex Project**

Patrick McNamara

### **Introduction.**

We live on that part of Euston Road which is being upgraded for the construction of WestConnex.

For over a year and a half we have been living in a construction nightmare. Construction noise and pollution from excavators, concrete saws, grinders and jack hammers operating just metres from our front door spewing smoke, sparks, vehicle exhaust and shattered concrete dust onto our front porch and windows. We are cut off from our street by fences and we are restricted to a narrow dangerous walkway that is a potential crime scene with no exit. Access to our properties is through our rear lane Euston Lane. Traffic in the lane and surrounding streets is out of control, as vehicles seek rat runs through the local community, to avoid the nightmare that has been created by the construction of WestConnex.

We have been treated with little regard by the WestConnex builders and community consultation is a box ticking exercise in fulfilling a condition of consent. Our opinions are not seriously considered as we have seen no substantial changes to critical issues that affect us.

The 2 critical issues we are battling now are noise amelioration works on our property and the redesign of the urban landscape plan in front of our properties.

WestConnex and the RMS will not sound insulate our property to the Australian Standard that is required by all authorities if you were to build a house near a major road.

For no good reason 63 perfectly good mature trees were removed from in front of our property in flagrant contravention of the ministerial approval, to be replaced by 2 trees.

We have been treated as collateral damage. This project has destroyed our lifestyle and amenity and of all the community who live here. We are seeing health effects. My wife has been diagnosed with atrial fibrillation since the work commenced.

Apart from the wider questions this inquiry will address and on which I will comment in part, this is deeply personal. The government has not properly addressed the impact that this road will have on the health and amenity of the people who live nearby. Too much emphasis has been placed on a questionable solution for a diminishing personal transport option.

A developer could not build a new house or apartments as close to a major road that WestConnex has been allowed to build this road to our apartment. When planning a major transport corridor good planning dictates that only appropriate users should be in the corridor...not homes.

If the road is to go here, a corridor should be acquired that reflects the impact of the road on the health and amenity of the residents. This cost should be factored into the cost of the project and was not.

## Terms of Reference

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

Many financial experts including SGS Economics, the City of Sydney and many economic journalists have questioned the adequacy and financial viability of the business case. This is outside my expertise.

However it is apparent that the full cost of WestConnex has not been accounted for. There is no accounting for the extra cost burden on surrounding councils that have to spend community funds on managing the extra traffic and parking that will be required in their areas. There is no accounting of the cost on the NSW health system, hospitals etc from the increased burden of pollution and noise induced illnesses that will afflict the local population. There has been no provision for acquiring all the properties that should have been acquired to have the project to comply with noise, pollution and health standards that rightly apply.

The scope of WestConnex has changed since the initial business case and I have not seen any information that the business case addresses the full scope of works.

**b) the cost of WestConnex project, including the size and reasons for overruns**

The cost of WestConnex has exceeded the budget cost.

In my view the reasons are lack of planning brought on by a deadline mentality, weak and incompetent administration by the regulatory authorities and a steamroller attitude by politicians demanding performance rather than prudence with NSW funds.

To illustrate my experience. At the start of the project Euston Road was to be widened to the extent that one verge was only 1.8 metres wide. RMS and Department of Planning insisted to me that this complied with Austroad Standards. This was clearly not the case. In fact the verge would be so narrow that the RMS would have to close off the adjoining lane to traffic to comply with its own WHS policy, if it was to do any work on the footpath. I am an accredited certifier and I believe I would have been guilty of professional misconduct if I had certified the plans that were approved to be built on Euston Road. The road was incorrectly designed and had to be amended with ongoing ramifications. It appears to me that inadequate provision for the relocation of services in Euston Road was made. Major watermains, electricity cables, drainage lines, communication cables have all been relaid and the roadway has been a wasteland for over a year while the contractor negotiates with authorities to locate and divert utilities which should have been preplanned prior to any work commencing.

**c) consideration of the governance and structure of the WestConnex project including the relationship between Sydney Motorway Corporation, Roads and Maritime Services, the Treasury and its shareholding Ministers**

The governance structure is inadequate. The RMS appears incapable of ensuring its own standards are adhered to. The corporate knowledge of RMS has been weakened over many years and they do not have sufficient experienced engineers to review plans and oversee construction. The Department of Planning is the compliance authority for the works, but it does not have adequate staff with the expertise in scrutinising road and engineering designs

or construction. When I complained to the DoP about the road widening they admitted they did not have the expertise and had to consult the RMS!

I have written letters to ministers for WestConnex, RMS, Planning and the Premier setting out my concerns. There is a culture of buck passing that fails to address the issues raised and an unquestioning faith in their departments judgement. I receive cliché responses that fail to address the issues and assure me that my issues will be addressed.

This project has been structured to make money for the Sydney Motorway Corporation at the expense of Australians. We carry the financial risk, health risk and environmental risk for a project that has questionable long term use in a diminishing mode of transport.

**d) the compulsory acquisition of property for the project**

A developer could not build a new housing project or a group of apartments as close to a major road that WestConnex has been allowed to build this road to our apartment. Our front door faces onto and is literally metres from the impact of WestConnex major feeder road in Alexandria.

When planning a major transport corridor such as WestConnex, good planning dictates that only appropriate users should be in the corridor...not homes.

If the road is to go here, a corridor should be acquired that reflects the impact of the road on the health and amenity of the residents.

Once a project like this is announced an appropriate corridor should be acquired, not the least possible. This cost is part of the project, just as it is for a developer who acquires land in a future transport corridor. This cost is recognised upfront in the financial model.

**e) the recommendations of the Audit Office of New South Wales and the Australian National Audit Office in regards to WestConnex**

I understand Audit office of NSW recommended closer scrutiny of the remainder of the project following critical failures in the early phase. I understand Australian National Audit Office criticised the federal funding of the project .

These recommendations should stop the project dead. This is a waste of taxpayer funds that is better spent on health and education. This project makes

**f) the extent to which the project is meeting the original goals of the project as articulated in 2012**

- The project does not connect to Port Botany or the airport.
- The project will increase congestion as set out in City of Sydney comprehensive traffic study. This project moves congestion from one spot to another. WestConnex will be another road to a carpark on another road.
- The project has destroyed the urban fabric of Alexandria and St Peters. Historic buildings demolished, Sydney Park ravaged, quiet urban streets will have enormous amounts of traffic dumped in them. Trees lining roads have been needlessly removed. The streetscape of Alexandria looks like a Syrian warzone.
- Destroyed the natural and cultural resources of Alexandria and St Peters and damaged the environment of Alexandria and St Peters.

**g) the relationship between WestConnex and other toll road projects including the Sydney Gateway, Western Harbour Tunnel, F6 and Beaches Link.**

No comment

**h) the circumstances by which WestConnex and the Sydney Gateway were declared to be separate projects in 2017**

no comment

- i) the cost of the project against its current valuation as determined through the sale of the Sydney Motorway Corporation and whether it represents a good investment for NSW taxpayers

no comment

**j) any other related matter.**

- **Health.** We have been affected already by the construction and fear the operation of WestConnex on our community. Pollution from an enormous amount of trucks & cars at our front door will be a hazard to our and our communities health. We apparently will get air filters installed to keep out pollution. What does that say about our ongoing health prospects? We will apparently get one day get noise reduction measures on our homes, what does that say about the noise and its affect on our lives. This will not be a healthy place to live.
- **Alternative transport.** Personal car use is a declining mode of transport that uses resources inefficiently and generates dangerous pollution. The building of WestConnex should be stopped and the resources invested in clean alternative transport options.
- **Climate change.** The promotion of fossil fuel transport arteries will accelerate climate change.
- **Pollution and air quality.** There is inadequate information of the amount and type of pollution this project will generate. The peer review of the air quality report for the project pointed to significant problems with the approach, the modelling and interpolation of results. This must be addressed and the correct answers revealed. Residents near the project will bear the burden directly and the cost will be borne by the whole community.
- **Traffic assessment.** The City of Sydney has released a compelling traffic study that is so different to the WestConnex traffic study that it must cause a complete reanalysis of the traffic modelling of the project. If the project study is as flawed as it appears then the project should be halted immediately.
- **Incompetence and negligence.** Approval has been given to parts of WestConnex that have not been designed or costed and to designs that do not comply with approval conditions or common Australian standards. These standards and conditions would apply in any project that did not have special state approval and thus avoids the scrutiny and normal checks and balances that should apply. This has lead to a cultural problem within government and by contractors. The government has been negligent in its duty of care to its citizens. It has wasted an enormous amount of money on a project that is of questionable economic value, little community value and rips the heart out of every community it passes through or affects.

I have attached selected photos and correspondence illustrating my concerns.