

**Submission
No 193**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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The original proposal put to the federal parliament for WestConnex proposed a link between western Sydney and the airport. That made a lot of sense as western Sydney has developed a strong industrial profile and access to the airport certainly needed improvement. However this is the only part of a now much expanded westconnex that has not yet happened. The airport corporation wants lots of \$\$ before it will allow a state road (whether leased out of not) to go across the Crown land it leased for the long term in 2001. Was that factored into the business plan - no.

The business cases multiplied as the additional roads and tunnels were added to over time by the private corporation running the show. The government has not properly considered alternatives such as public transport and demand management. This is most likely because the asset creation and asset sales and lease arrangements the government favours does not translate to attractive profit making businesses for the private sector. With roads they can charge a toll to go on their 'tracks', the public bring their own carriages, pay a tax on their carriage, pay for their upkeep and fuel. Tolls are also now automated.

The budget is now \$16.8 billion – a 68% increase on the original estimate.

Some of the tunnels follow routes similar to the major roads (then called 'freeways' but now of course tollways) that were resisted strongly by the community and eventually abandoned by the government.

Those proposals also included knocking down houses and increasing pollution near homes and schools. The current developments include concentrating the pollution in specific areas where the smoke stacks will be located; often next to schools, homes and proposed green public spaces. WestConnex will turn Rozelle into a dumping ground for toxic exhaust fumes with three unfiltered exhaust stacks at the Rozelle Rail Yards (where the government is promising green space and the Urban Growth Development Corporation is saying there could be residential and business development) and one at Victoria Road at Iron Cove Bridge just metres from homes and a primary school.

A project of this scale, using taxpayers funds, should be subject to rigorous assessment. The NSW Auditor-General and Infrastructure Australia have criticised the governance of the Westconex project.

The project is diverting funding from public transport which is desperately needed across Sydney it appears on the basis that public transport does not make a big enough profit to meet Treasury rules and government revenue targets. The role of the government is to govern for all its citizens and for future generations. It has a duty to govern in the public interest not for private interests. Recent revelations about how Transurban can organise its data, finances and influence government to hand it guaranteed and ever increasing profits is not in the public interest.