

**Submission
No 192**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

Name: Mr Ognian Pishev

Date Received: 4 September 2018

30 August 2018

We are long term Newtown residents and welcome this opportunity to convey our concerns about the WestConnex Project to the Parliamentary Inquiry. In particular, we are concerned about the following:

(a) The adequacy of the business case for the WestConnex project, including the cost-benefit ratio.

We have witnessed many changes to the scope of the project through 2016 that include extra kilometres of tunnels, changes to tunnel alignment, additional ramp structures and removal of the portals in Camperdown. The original plan for roads from the west to go to the ports has been radically changed. As far as we can tell, none of the proposed roads go anywhere near the port area. The traffic modelling that determined the original decisions doesn't take these changes into account and there hasn't been new modelling. Therefore, the current traffic modelling has to be inaccurate, and the business case predictions and cost benefit ratio must also be incorrect.

This has several ramifications for residents, and for the impending sale of WestConnex to a private corporation, most likely to be TransUrban (who currently have a monopoly on toll roads in Sydney). We are concerned, like many of our neighbours, about how quality control and public safety connected to the construction of the tunnels that will run under our houses, will be managed once the sale of Sydney Motorway Corporation goes through and the new owners seek to minimize profit losses due to the original incorrect modelling. The NSW Government is desperate to sell off WestConnex and based on the way our concerns about this project have been blatantly ignored in the past, we despair that they will secure a safe outcome for local residents and protect our interests as Stage 3 of the project progresses.

(j) any other related matter

Traffic and pollution

We are concerned about cars using backstreets as a rat run, and the ensuing increase in local traffic, noise and air pollution as motorists seek to avoid tolls. In addition, environmental and health impacts due to increased traffic congestion from the St Peters Interchange on King Street and narrow densely populated side streets will also bring greater noise and air pollution.

Damage from tunnelling, dilapidation reports and compensation processes

We are very concerned about the M4-M5 Link and the effects on Newtown and Camperdown homes and heritage structures near the proposed tunnel construction. There are many houses that were built in the 19th Century in this heritage listed area which already suffers from the unstable earth and environment.

SMC has said that affected properties within 50 metres of the construction sites for the tunnels and for 50 metres either side of tunnel corridors will be offered dilapidation reports. This distance is not enough. Our house is 140 years old and is situated over unstable street infrastructure. When construction of the deep underground car park for the nearby Flour Mills apartments, 100 metres from our house, took place some years ago, the roadway adjacent to our house caved in and our house developed multiple cracks. We

understand that the proposed tunnels, according to the indicative plans, are to run under the end of our street, the same distance, 100 metres, from our house as the Flour Mill apartments.

The zone for affected properties should be widened to 150 metres. We need truly independent assessments of our properties before, immediately after construction works and three years on, to allow time for the effects of subsidence to show. Engineers have told us that subsidence is the gravest threat to our properties - and the most difficult to prove. We have been advised by Mr Noel Childs, a tunneling expert, that subsidence can occur years after tunneling concludes. WestConnex continues to offer only condition reports before and immediately after construction, within a very narrow zone, thereby refusing to address this vital issue.

If their homes are damaged why should residents have to spend months or years trying to establish fault, as residents have had to do after construction of the Brisbane Airport Link tunnel, before any redress can be provided? Residents will be further disadvantaged if they find that their claim has been voided because it falls outside of the approved timeframe for damage to be identified and a claim lodged. If the government sells off WestConnex, who will be responsible for damage? Who will enforce compliance without residents having to drag it through the courts for years?

Vibration monitoring

Why can't there be real time community-accessible vibration monitors along the path of both tunnels? Real time Internet access for the community or its representatives to independent vibration monitoring along the tunnel route would allow for potentially dangerous spikes in vibrations to be addressed immediately instead of being lost in aggregated reports that are monitored after the event, and after damage to structures that could have been prevented has been set in motion.

In conclusion, we ask for clarification about what will happen when WestConnex is sold off. Nothing that SMC has done so far, and their failure to listen to, let alone satisfactorily answer, the many different concerns across the inner west community, has allayed fears that once WestConnex is sold, the residents will be well and truly up the creek. Who is to decide the route of the tunnels? Will residents be advised before construction commences or will they be kept in the dark? What measures will be put in place to ensure that the new owner puts transparent procedures in place around all the concerns raised above? How will they be held accountable and to whom will they be accountable? If things go wrong, who can residents turn to?

Sincerely,

Merilyn Fairskye and Ognian Pishev

Residents,