

**Submission
No 242**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

Name: Mr John Boyle
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Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry.

I strongly disagree with the underlying premise of, WestConnex and its spaghetti of polluting tunnels, stacks, and roads, encouraging even more motorists to drive their cars and trucks, from the south and west, into an already congested city, many of which will, doubtless, end up in the already badly congested Eastern Suburbs, that will be brought to gridlock, when the undercapacity, world's longest 67 metre long trams commence service taking up two lanes of ANZAC Parade, from Alison Road.

"The auditor general released a damning report on Sydney's WestConnex toll road, concluding that its \$3.5bn of federal funding and loans did not provide taxpayers with value for money. But WestConnex is an even worse deal for suburban motorists, who will be expected to pay much of the \$17bn cost – for what is essentially an inner-city road freight scheme, designed to increase truck productivity between Sydney's port and industrial areas."

Westconnex is likely the most highly flawed and costly transport infrastructure project ever built in Australia, which has already wasted billions of both federal and State taxpayers' dollars. Billions have already been committed, on this project that appears to be made up on the run, with its puzzling costly overruns for Stages 1 and 2, Which leaves one wondering if the taxpayers will have to pick up the extra costs of Stage 3, whilst the state government has sold 51%, for a reported 9.3 billion, to a company that already has a private monopoly in the management/ownership of toll roads, and this before it is even finally, satisfactorily, designed.

This unacceptable project will impose unacceptable levels of traffic congestion that will impact across all of inner Sydney. Westconnex will unleash both congestion and air pollution from stacks in many Sydney neighbourhoods. This project will impose heavy unfair tolls upon motorists travelling from the south and western Sydney, and serious, long term health and environmental damage upon all of Sydney.

WestConnex represents, at best, a 1950s transport solution.

I believe that most suburban commuters would prefer a swift, comfortable train trip into the heart of the city than pay \$27 each day to drive through a dark tunnel, filled with unknown toxic gases likely to have a serious toll on health. Additionally, by increasing the competitive advantage of road freight over rail, it will actually encourage more trucks onto the road network. During peak times, truck operators will pay to use the toll roads. However, they are likely to avoid the tolls at other times, meaning more trucks on suburban streets off-peak, and at night.

Instead of this extravagant, illogical and out of date solution, an addition heavy rail line should have been built to bring passengers, swiftly, and in comfort into the city, not this irrational motorway, that will, likely, inflict long term health and environmental damage upon all of Sydney. The well understood conundrum is that, in general, motorways ultimately end up producing more traffic rather than resolving traffic congestion. As road capacity increases, it has been proven that so does demand. Even if the M4-M5 tunnel was better than an equivalent surface road, WestConnex and other road projects induce demand overall. Such demand takes years to build up and the air quality assessment does not appear to account for that. And, the building of this unsuitable project has exposed the community to too many years of damaging construction work. Even after completion many parts of the city will see no respite to traffic congestion. WestConnex's own Stage 3 EIS makes that clear, and in fact such congestion is used as justification for more motorway projects.

Furthermore, the building and extension of WestConnex has unnecessarily destroyed the beloved heritage family homes of dozens of residents and destroyed hundreds of essential trees and valuable green space, habitat and parklands. More than 50 properties were acquired to be demolished for the motorway in Haberfield, which is designated a heritage conservation area, when construction was well underway. When asked, Lucy Turnbull, the chief commissioner of the Greater Sydney Commission, responsible for drawing up plans to shape the city, said that she was unaware of the large-scale destruction of homes for the WestConnex motorway in the heritage suburb of Haberfield. Such lack of knowledge and oversight by a body charged with the responsibility for overall city planning, further, makes the case for an inquiry to understand and come to grips with what has been happening on this apparent, unsupervised, out-of-control, headless, project.

The Berejiklian government has now sold 51% of the Sydney Motorway Corporation to an unaccountable toll road, private, monopoly. This sale risks locking NSW into toll concession contracts that will damage the public, for years to come. "For a fire-sale price, it will get an asset, for 9.3 billion, with above-inflation toll increases guaranteed until 2060. Toll road king Transurban's share price has skyrocketed in recent years, no doubt partly in anticipation of adding WestConnex, the M4 and the M5 to its Sydney toll road monopoly."

The WestConnex project should be stopped for a full inquiry. This project might have made sense in the 1950's but not today. There are far better cost effective solutions available. WestConnex is a bad deal for Australian taxpayers, and a bad deal for Sydney commuters. At the minimum any further work on WestConnex should be stopped, for an inquiry into every aspect of this heavily flawed project.

Sincerely,
John Boyle.