

**Submission
No 245**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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SUBMISSION: INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACTS OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

I am writing in regards to the impacts of WestConnex, specifically the Rozelle Interchange and M4-M5 Interchange and associated projects, on my community in Rozelle.

As a resident who lives within 300m of the area of greatest impact, and with a child attending Rozelle Public School, less than 50m from the proposed Rozelle and M4-M5 Interchanges and the Western Harbour Approach dive site, I am very concerned about the following:

- As the SGS Business Case Report reveals, the **business case is extremely flawed**, with **no cost-benefit analysis of alternatives** such as public transport or other routes
 - The Government's **business case, as well as a great deal of financial and other information is still secret**, thereby **not allowing the community to see the supposed benefits or potential costs of the project**, as well as **separating projects to hide the overall cost**
 - The **budget is now \$16.8b – a 68% increase on the original estimate**, with the City of Sydney estimating a further **\$28.5b associated costs**, bringing the total cost of the project to **\$45.3b**
 - **What other road projects around the State, particularly in regional NSW, have been diverted from those communities who desperately need roads to impose them on communities like mine who don't want them to fund Stage 3?**
 - 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**
 - By rushing the sale before completion, the **Government has abandoned its own original sales model of completing the project in stages, de-risking it for investors and taxpayers**
 - The **ACCC has criticised unsolicited tenders by toll road operators as detrimental to commuters and taxpayers**
 - Potential bidders like Transurban could now have a monopoly on NSW toll roads, with **little or no funds returned to taxpayers thanks to extraordinarily high upside swing of 130% on the road before any income returned to taxpayers**, despite commuters and our grand-children paying tolls for this for up to 60 years
 - **Hundreds of homes, businesses and parklands will be compulsorily acquired with little or no information on how this process will be handled, which properties will be acquired, and with many homeowners and businesses paid far below market value for their properties and with little or no ability to refuse**
 - **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 Rozelle Public School**
 - There has been **no accounting of the significant health and other costs imposed on communities, especially our most vulnerable, and particularly the young children at Rozelle Public School, only 50-100m from most of the most dangerous and disruptive construction**
 - There has been **no accounting or provision for damage to heritage buildings, such as Rozelle Public, and many homes, like mine, as a result of construction**
 - **The impact on the school and children of vibration and noise during construction, and the dispersal of toxic spoil, such as lead- and asbestos-contaminated soil, over the playground and into classrooms**
 - **Already affected schools like St Peters and Haberfield Public Schools have reported drastically increased levels of dangerous pollutants, as well as other impacts, such as heavy vehicle traffic, vibration, noise and other disruptions**
 - There has been **no publication of plans or strategies to deal with the impact or co-ordination of building the deep-water cruise ship terminal at White Bay, the Bays Precinct residential redevelopment, the Glebe Island concrete batching plant, the Western Harbour Approach and the Rozelle Interchange at the same time**
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- The **M4-M5 and Rozelle Interchanges** have been approved without any actual design, meaning that any **community concerns or comments on the design concept and EIS are now invalid**, given that the contract allows any changes can be made without any **consultation with the community it impacts most**
- **Little or no consultation with the school community**

Despite saying that it has consulted with the community, we have had little to no communication from SMC, RMS or the Government on potential impacts to the school and surrounding neighbourhood.

Our only direct contact with SMC was on Wednesday 20 September 2017, two days before the end of third term, and only ten days before the EIS submissions deadline on air quality and tunnel ventilation.

At the meeting, SMC representatives, including air quality expert Andrew Mattes, told us not to record the meeting as they could not be fully honest or candid if we did. This is extraordinary.

Mattes also told us that while the pollution stack 100m from Rozelle Public kindergarten could be moved, and fumes could be blown back into the tunnel, it was too expensive to do so further away from the school.

As there is no stack at Birchgrove planned for the proposed Western Harbour Approach, whose dive site at the Tigers site is only 30m from the school, all these fumes will be blown back to the Terry Street site, further endangering children.

If it was too expensive to disperse these fumes from the Goods Yard, why is it not to do so from Birchgrove, further away?

Mattes also said that SMC had budgeted for the morbidity – leading to death – of 0.2 children per year of construction and operation. This too is extraordinary. How many children does the Government plan on dying to complete the project? Surely even one child dying is too many?

SMC offered another information session regarding on Wednesday 11 September 2017, two days after the start of fourth term and only five days before the deadline for submissions to the EIS, meaning many parents might not have time to prepare submissions.

Another third, unscheduled, unspecified meeting was proposed for after the EIS submissions deadline, effectively rendering this meeting pointless.

SMC cancelled all further meetings without explanation on Friday 21 September 2017, and we have had no further communication from them or RMS regarding any proposed impacts on the school and children.

I am not opposed to development, I just want it done right, for our children and our community, and without unnecessary harm to our most vulnerable members, the sick, the very young and the aged.

Moreover, given the exceedingly high cost – especially in comparison to other Australian and international infrastructure projects – I am especially concerned about how these funds could have been better spent on services and infrastructure NSW desperately needs, like hospitals, schools and public transport, especially given the Government's high development approval rate, to cater for so many more residents, particularly in the Inner West.

For these reasons, I oppose this project in its current, nebulous form and its potentially devastating impacts on our children, community and State.