

**Submission
No 248**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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31 August 2018

Legislative Council - Public Accountability Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my evidence regarding the WestConnex Project.

Work started near my home in 2015 for the King Georges Rd M5 Interchange. That was the year I was doing my HSC.

We lived through a lot of noise, dust and inconvenience during construction. A reasonable person would “suck it up” if a project was going to be great for the public, even if not directly to themselves. Take for example the rail line duplication at Beverly Hills. We ended up losing services which was annoying, but you have to recognise that further West at Campbelltown they really needed more and faster trains.

WestConnex is not benefitting the public, though. Its benefitting toll-road companies and the roads lobby.

WestConnex didn't bother to try and keep the noise down. They would leave their reversing noise at the high pitch sound. They yelled out to each other at night. They used jackhammers at night, when they were not supposed to. They made noisy deliveries at 3am, when it could have been done at 9pm. Their trucks arrived too early in the morning, waking the street at 4.30am each day. They were not supposed to arrive until 7am. They would have smoko outside my bedroom window.

WestConnex didn't care about the noise. Half of Cooloongatta Rd was blocked for construction. We asked WestConnex to put up a sign asking motorists to drive through quietly. The sign was so tiny, no one noticed. We asked that the automatic lights be timed better so that drivers didn't get frustrated and start beeping their horns and to put a notice on the big lighted signs, but WestConnex didn't bother. Horn beeping went on all day and all night, sometimes drivers would sit on their horn until the light changed.

We were lucky compared to my friends living at Haberfield and St Peters. At least our section was only 18 months compared to 4 years plus with my mates, with the noise all day and virtually every night.

How can people cope with school or work, when they are constantly woken at night?

The impact on the young by WestConnex construction is huge. The noise. The smell. The heavy trucks. Parents frustration. The lack of sleep. The years and years of construction. Our parks used as construction sites. Why wasn't human health and wellbeing given a priority concern when deciding to build the huge WestConnex instead of better public transport which takes less space? Worse, so many schools and sports fields are to be near an unfiltered exhaust stack which is dangerous. What health costs will my generation have to shoulder?

It was better public transport that we've needed for ages. We were promised a rail link from Kingsgrove to Strathfield be finished in 2014, but it was never started. We only get more roads that are clogged not long after they are finished. How much better it would have been for us students to get around by good public transport rather than relying on our parents to drive us. That's freedom for everyone, including drivers.

It seems dumb to me that this city has not invested in better linked public transport to get us moving about. My friends and I hardly ever need to go to the CBD. We do need to get about north and south, which seems dumb that we have to catch a train into Central then travel back out to where we need to go. Why aren't the rail lines connected between key stations like in modern cities? Why aren't there dedicated bus lanes and more busses in the north south route?

I am also angry about the tolls. I am 20. I will be 63 and maybe retired before Transurban will stop charging WestConnex tolls. Although I think we need to all pay to use transport infrastructure, we don't have a public transport alternative. My choices are 1) expensive tolls going into Transurban's pockets (which I can't afford), OR 2) stuck in traffic on local roads, OR 3) spend two or three times the travel time using overcrowded public transport. I'm worried that Transurban will force the NSW Government from investing in better public transport so as not to compete with their toll profits until I am aged 63, just like the M2. What about my children and grandchildren will they be car dependent too? Will we still be building old fashioned roads then, or will NSW look to how smarter cities move people and start investing in public transport?

I would like an explanation as to why better linked public transport was ignored by the NSW Government in choosing a WestConnex toll-road instead of the \$10 billion in public transport projects in 2012. We have plenty of roads. We don't have enough public transport. Who and what forces decided to benefit Transurban and the roads lobby over modern transport planning?

Sean English