

**Submission
No 251**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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WestConnex goes against all international urban planning developments which show that more roads create more traffic and congestion. Such a toll road will only profit private toll road operators and construction companies. It will subject communities to serious health risks, loss of homes and green spaces, prohibitively expensive tolls, and continuing traffic congestion for decades. So I oppose WestConnex because of the negative social, environmental and economic impacts it will have on our communities - for future generations too

I oppose the compulsory acquisition of people's homes for this dirty tollway and the destruction of precious parklands and green spaces. There is a clear case instead for the redirection of public funds into sustainable public transport. In a city of fast growing population, mass transit is the only effective way.

I also oppose the faulty planning and budgeting process for Westconnex. Indeed, the NSW Ombudsman's report and the City of Sydney's independent report show that billions of dollars worth of contracts were signed before planning approvals and updated business cases were released. When the NSW Liberal government and then federal Labor government announced WestConnex in 2012, it was done so with the recommendation of Infrastructure NSW, which declared WestConnex as Sydney's next motorway priority set to cost a total \$10 billion. The project was originally to include a Sydney Airport Access Link and a link to Port Botany, but neither of these exist in the current version of WestConnex, even though the cost of the project has ballooned by an additional \$6.8 billion. WestConnex is now being overseen by the Sydney Motorway Corporation (SMC), a public-private corporation set up in 2014 to secure finance and manage ongoing project delivery.

Interestingly, two high-ranking government ministers also happen to be SMC shareholders. SMC also does not fall within the GIPA Act, so the project's internal workings have remained highly opaque. WestConnex has no public mandate. Indeed, close to 30,000 submissions have been received against it. And yet these thousands of objections against WestConnex have been virtually hidden on the NSW Department of Planning's website.

The federal Coalition government has committed \$3.5 billion in grants and concessional loans to WestConnex - despite numerous independent reports and reviews commissioned by local councils showing serious flaws with the project. The SGS report into the Updated Business Case provides a particularly damning critique of the economic and financial claims made in favour of this expensive and destructive toll road.

One of the many health concerns is the smokestacks - in Rozelle alone, four enormous unfiltered smokestacks are proposed. There is also the incessant noise pollution and vibrations that people in St Peters have been suffering during the ongoing construction phase. Much heritage destruction has already occurred, such as terrace houses in St Peters and Federation houses in the heritage suburb Haberfield.

Furthermore, there has been inadequate compensation for people forced to sell their houses, and for people in suburbs such as Kingsgrove whose houses have undergone considerable cracking