

**Submission  
No 264**

## **INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT**

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I would like to comment on the effects of Westconnex on my neighbourhood and the wider community. The points are in no particular order of importance but taken together, they point to the devastating impact that the project has had and will continue to have into the future.

I live in an area with the greatest density in Sydney and with the huge number of residential developments underway and planned in the future, the crippling traffic congestion which we currently already suffer will only get worse. The problem of congestion is serious in every way but Westconnex is not the way to solve it. It goes against every tenet of best practice integrated traffic planning and will entrench motor traffic congestion into the future. It makes me want to weep when I think that this is an opportunity lost now for decades and I wonder why any modern government who is wanting to use best practice for the good of the community they serve would do it this way. I can only conclude that it is not the community they are interested in serving because surely no modern government planners could be so ignorant of best practice to do something so stupid from a planning perspective.

Because of the huge numbers of new residents who have moved into the area over the thirty years I have lived here, the public transport which we rely on to get into the city or the local shopping centres is totally inadequate and a motorway that ends where I live is completely useless to us.

Already we have fast and dangerous rat running through our once quiet residential streets and Sydney Council is presently drawing up a plan to mitigate some of the worst effects for residents when Westconnex dumps even more motor traffic at St Peters.

Increased traffic brings increased pollution which is already bad enough. Because of the secrecy the State government has shrouded the project in we cannot find out what the figures are, according to an independent study commissioned by Sydney Council, air pollution will be well above recommended safety levels thus endangering the health of everyone who lives, works or goes to school in the area.

This state of secrecy operates at every level and in every aspect of this project and this has been deliberately engineered by the government. ARAG (Alexandria Residents Action Group) requested that the Dept of Planning send some representatives to a meeting to answer some of the questions we have about the project. The meeting was duly organised, a huge number of residents turned out only to be told that the planning people had just sent notice that they would not be coming because they thought the residents would be violent—we are actually a very polite lot. They said we could send them the questions and they would send written answers but when their response finally came it did not answer the questions specifically asked or answered in a totally inadequate way. This really makes us angry. If everything is above board what is the government trying to hide.

I am shocked and dismayed at the way the government has ignored heritage and environment laws. It has demolished large areas of Haberfield despite the laws which were set up to protect the whole suburb and it has demolished heritage houses in Alexandria. To add insult to injury it has cheated the owners of these properties by not paying them market value. It has driven a huge motorway through whole suburbs which will split and fracture communities. It has cut down mature trees in Sydney Park which are valuable wildlife corridors and it has alienated big areas of the Park from public use.

It is a shocking mismanagement and waste of public money. Credit Suisse have done an analysis of the returns NSW can expect from our 'investment' in Westconnex. They estimate the value at the princely sum of \$3.0 billion. This should be a matter for the ICAC. It is difficult to understand why modern government planners who are trying to solve problems in the best possible ways for the community they serve would choose to do it in this stupid way. The only conclusion one can draw is that it is not their community they are serving.

Louise Gilbert