

**Submission
No 267**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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Date Received: 31 August 2018

Westconnex has been an endless nightmare for residents throughout the inner west, and particularly near me in St Peters (just a few blocks away where many of my friends live, or lived) – with no respite in sight, and even when construction (destruction) is completed, there will be the enormous impact of this horrendous tollway, spaghetti exchange and unfiltered ventilation stacks and the increased traffic chaos that will ensure when vehicles are pumped out of the tunnel on to our congested narrow local roads.

This project has been cloaked in secrecy, mumbo jumbo, unsubstantiated claims of benefits, no clear strategy, cost blowouts, and all this lack of transparency compounded by privatizing the corporation and thus restricting Freedom of Information access. As mentioned above, the St Peters interchange monstrosity is quite near my home, and many of my friends live right near the construction site/s. Well, to be more accurate – many of my friends used to live there. Most have now moved or are in the process of moving, via compulsory acquisition, or because the conditions of living in the area have been so hideous, disruptive and depressing they have had to leave to retain their sanity and health. The damage to their properties has also been a consideration. Most have either not been compensated adequately, or the value of their properties has bottomed, or even not been able to obtain further bank funding to continue their renovations (started prior to this ill-conceived project being announced.)

The impacts experienced by all who live in the area have been financial, emotional, physical and mental. The intolerable disruption and detrimental effect of demolitions, constant dust, vibrations damaging properties, relentless noise throughout the days and night, the inconsiderate behavior of contractors, lack of adequate notifications and alternative arrangements for noisy nightworks, increased heavy vehicle traffic and parking issues on local streets, road closures, incompetence, has all had an enormous accumulative effect on my friends. This project has destroyed a community, as well as individual's lives.

At the end of this project we the community will be left to deal with the impacts of increased traffic on our local roads, and the very real health risks associated with UNfiltered ventilation stacks in our neighbourhood belching out particulate pollution. This project is not going to achieve whatever specious benefits were first touted – it won't fix congestion, it won't make driving times less (or only marginally, for a small window of time), it does not lead to the international airport or freight terminal or shipping terminal. It will impose misery in many forms.

This enquiry must ask the questions – what is this for? Who benefits from it? Why is it so expensive, why do costs keep blowing out, and why is it now being sold off? We the taxpayers paid for this infrastructure, but the government is selling it to the (lowest) bidder (selling it for so much less than the bill for its construction), to be then taxed AGAIN for it via tolls paid to a private corporation. Why was it pushed through approval at every stage, when there was no clear business case, and so many submissions (including from professional and specific related bodies, as well as communities) objected to it and presented professional reasons why it was not a good idea and offered alternative concepts? The obscene amount of money wasted on this project should have been spent on public transport for a start.

Westconnex is a nightmare now and in the future. It is a blight to our community now and in the future. It will affect our health now and in the future. The only beneficiaries of this monstrosity are the contractors, and the new tollway owners.