

Submission
No 346

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX
PROJECT**

Name: Ms Tamara Regan

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Partially
Confidential

Tamara Regan

To the Parliamentary Inquiry,

My name is Tamara Regan and my family and I live with my family at Brown Street, St.Peters and we have been severely impacted mentally, physically and emotionally by the construction of the Westconnex road.

We received an acquisition package for our home on Melbourne Cup day in 2014. We were shocked and dumbfounded by the arrival of this document and all of our neighbours came out into the street to discuss what had been dropped on our doorstep that day. From that point on in time our lives have been changed forever. We have suffered 4 years of environmental damage, loss of community and severe health impacts.

We now live in a 24 hour construction zone and have done so now for nearly 4 years. When residents were forced out of their homes we experienced the emotional loss of seeing our close neighbours being removed from their homes. Then we had to witness their much loved homes being demolished.

I have included an appendix of some of the complaints I have made about the project in this submission.

My first complaints related to the unsafe work practices of the Westconnex demolition crews when they were knocking down our neighbours homes. Homes that contained asbestos were not correctly demolished with work and health safety procedures. I had to alert planning and workcover to the demolition of 4 Brown Street which was built out of fibro from the 1950's. It was not until I told them that the house was made of asbestos that they then took precautions for themselves. The community and residents were not notified of the dangers of the asbestos removal.

The workers did not use dust control techniques to hose down the plumes of dust that enveloped our suburb when they knocked down over 40 homes. This was a constant problem and residents had to contact the EPA and Rob Sherry at Planning to complain about the dust plumes. The constant need to complain has caused much distress to myself and my family. We have had to complain on a daily basis about the dust, constant 24 hour construction noise and behaviours of the people who are employed by Westconnex.

My family and I have witnessed 2 physical fights by men who work for Westconnex in front of our home. Workers smoke in front of our home and drop their cigarette butts in the street. Workers park and idle their cars on our street in front of our homes while they charge their phones. I have been verbally assaulted and abused by workers when I have asked them to turn off their idling vehicles in front of my bedroom window at 11pm at night.

The greatest debilitating event for my family was when Westconnex allowed hydrogen sulphide from the leachate at the landfill site to permeate our suburb. Over a period of time in 2017 from March until August, hydrogen sulphide was released from the landfill site with no pollution control. The release of Hydrogen sulphide caused myself and my family to become ill. I have included all of my Doctors certificates to show the various stakeholders of the project the detrimental effects it had on my family. I experienced extreme nausea, high blood pressure, chest infections and conjunctivitis. My children also have had chest infections and conjunctivitis. Under the direction of my Doctor, I relocated my family for a week when the hydrogen sulphide was at its worst. I had to take my family and seek alternative accommodation out of funding from my own resources. Westconnex was informed that I had to be relocated. They did not offer any form of compensation for this.

The extremely loud concrete cutting at night has also resulted in me removing my family from our home to a different location. I am currently studying my Masters of Special Education having been awarded a \$20,000 scholarship to do so. I have fears that I will fail this pattern of study and if I do so, I will have to repay the scholarship.

It has affected my academic standing and as a student who once had an academic standing of High Distinction, I am now only passing. It is not just my studies that are being affected. My daughter is about to begin her Preliminary HSC course and she is being severely impacted by the 24hour construction noise as well. In the past she has won academic awards in all of her subjects but this has now been affected and she is no longer on the honour roll. This is impacting on our mental and emotional health. My family has been unable to function as a family as we are exhausted and tired from the 4 years of exposure to Westconnex.

The construction noise that occurs over 24 hours is slowly driving my family and I crazy. I have had to fight for noise abatement for my property. Every home in my suburb that was identified for Type 2 noise abatement has had their double glazed windows and doors installed. My home is meant to receive Type 2 abatement as indicated in the EIS. RMS and Westconnex have refused this and for 2 years I have been fighting for the Type 2 to be installed in my home. They have consistently refuted the EIS and my claims for Type 2 abatement. They continue to insist that my home is Type 1. My whole house, as well as other homes, were identified as Type 2 in the EIS. Every other home has received their Type 2 abatement now. I am the only home left that has to constantly be exposed to the construction noise during both the night and day. To make matters worse, homes that have sta empty for 4 years that were not needed have been fully abated with Type 2 noise abatement. Nobody lives in these homes. They have sat vacant for 4 years. RMS and Westconnex have soundproofed empty homes while residents like myself and my family have to endure the constant noise of construction.

I have to constantly complain about the concrete cutting saws, the jackhammering, the reverse beepers on trucks and the loud talking of the workers as they yell instructions to be heard above all of the other noises. When I have complained about these noises, it wasn't until I had made numerous complains that Westconnex community liaison dropped a family set of foam earplugs at my home. We were told to wear the earplugs at night. Subsequently my children got ear infections from these. I recently have been exposed to such high levels of night noise that I went out at 5.30am in the morning and screamed at the workers that they were keeping my family and children awake. I wrote an email to all key stakeholders explaining that myself and my family had been kept awake all night. The email was passionate and showed that I had reached breaking point. The community liaison team then attended my home with one set of noise cancelling headphones. There are 5 members in my family so I have assumed that we are meant to share the one set. I had to make a further complaint the day after as my daughter was kept awake as well. The community liason team again came and gave me another set. They explained that only people studying their Masters or HSC were able to get the headphones.

I have included a number of my email complaints in this submission. This is only a fraction of the emails I have sent. It is almost a daily occurrence of issues that arise in our community. I now have complaint fatigue and find the process of complaining futile as nothing is responded to and residents are ignored. For every email I send I get generic responses and nothing followed up. Every day something happens that breaches work, health and safety procedures. It is constant. Our particular street has experienced the brunt of the complete construction debacle. I have filmed and photographed the breaches. I have sent these as complaints. It has not been rectified.

I have made numerous complains about the lack of sediment and dust control in our area. There is no watering down of sites and streets. I have filmed these daily occurrences and sent the images to the EPA. I have received a response from Westconnex that stated that this was "trial and error" with the equipment used. For a \$17 billion project there should be no such thing as trial and error. It is not trial and error in using a water truck to wash things down. These strategies such have been in place in the first instance.

Westconnex and RMS treat residents with contempt. They have no concern for our emotional, physical and mental wellbeing. They disregard complaints and don't lodge them as complaints, rather as inquiries. They are patronising and assume that as a community we don't have knowledge of the effects the road building has on those that resident within the construction footprint.

Of major concern was the time I intervened in a demolition crew fencing a home to be demolished. Westconnex workers began to prepare number Brown Street for demolition. They had put the cyclone fence up around the

house after cutting the powerlines. I walked outside to see what they were doing. They responded with preparing the house to be demolished. The house actually is owned by my neighbour . He is a FIFO and was away at the time. The workers did not know that the house was not a part of the project. They were preparing to knock it down and had to rely on my information to tell them what houses to demolish and which ones to leave.

My home is also falling apart. I have included photos of the cracks that have appeared in all of the room in my house. Every single wall now has major cracks in it. Our new kitchen has cracks and so does our newly renovated living area. Westconnex are not taking any responsibility for this either. Since the construction started the cracks have appeared all through my house and gotten worse. I am concerned that the structure of my property will not be able to withstand the constant road building that is occurring next to my home. We can feel the vibrations underfoot and know the damage it is doing by just feeling the constant rumbling of the ground that reverberates through our floors, walls, windows and doors.

My greatest concern for the community of St.Peters is the fact that a 1950's road corridor will be now rezoned as an "Infrastructure Corridor". There are 30 homes in St.Peters that are classified as residential. These homes and other homes in the road corridor will have a zoning that is unfair and not acceptable to inflict on a community that is already decimated. As residents we would have never bought and chosen to raise our children in a suburb that is classified as an "Infrastructure Corridor". We are in turn stuck and unable to leave the home we purchased as no one in their right mind would consider buying in an "Infrastructure Corridor". This rezoning should not happen. It is not an infrastructure corridor. It is a suburb that had a strong and vibrant artist culture. We have already lost over 40 homes and their families. We have seen neighbours forced out that lived in the area and went to local schools in the area. It will be no longer safe for our children to play in the street and parks with other children. The unfiltered pollution stacks will spew carcinogenic particles into the atmosphere and into the lungs of our children. It will no longer be safe to play in our parks that are now completely overwhelmed by the road project.

Myself, my family and our community has been constantly affected by the building of this road. The emotional toll and its detrimental effects is causing trauma to my family and neighbours. Our homes are no longer sanctuaries that we can retreat to. The building noise permeates our home and drives us to distraction. Our homes are now covered in dust and it is impossible to maintain and do the upkeep on our properties. There is dust in every room of our house. There is construction dust in our cupboards. The clothes on the line are covered with construction dust. Everything combined is relentless. We have no escape from the noise, dust pollution, hydrogen sulphide and 24 hours works. All of these issues should have been addressed prior to the road even being built. Our homes should have had given noise abatement even before the construction began. We are living in a 24 hour construction zone that shows no respect for those that live surrounded by it.

There needs to be consequences for what Westconnex has done to the community. It is an infrastructure project that has no benefit for the community or wider Sydney. It will not solve the congestion problems that our city faces. It is not a sustainable way to develop transport systems for a 21st century city.

Please acknowledge my submission and understand the impacts Westconnex has had emotionally, mentally and physically on my family and myself. We feel that we have been treated in a completely unjust manner by all key stakeholders with no respect shown towards us as a community.

Kind regards,

Tamara Regan