

**Submission
No 393**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

Name: Ms Duggan Maryanne

Date Received: 31 August 2018

Impact of the WestConnex project – Parliamentary Enquiry

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Westconnex Ventilation Facility, Underwood Road, Homebush

This submission outlines public health concerns and other issues in relation to the location of the Westconnex Ventilation Facility in an area targeted for significant population increase via the NSW Government's Parramatta Road Urban Transformation Strategy and the Homebush and Strathfield Planned Precinct policy.

Section 1 provides background to the Westconnex Ventilation Facility project, including the original planning approval.

Section 2 outlines key community concerns regarding the facility.

Section 3 outlines the work Strathfield Council has undertaken in investigating Westconnex obligations, representing community interest, and attempting to address community concerns.

Section 4 provides a conclusion.

1. Introduction/Background

The Westconnex Ventilation Facility located in Underwood Road Homebush was approved by NSW Minister for Planning Rob Stokes under Section 115ZB of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 on 11 February 2016 (refer to Attachment A), subject to the following conditions:

- Prevent, minimise and/or offset adverse environmental impacts including economic and social impacts.
- Set standards and performance measures for acceptable environmental performance
- Ensure regular monitoring and reporting, and
- Provide ongoing environmental management

Key obligations for the operator include:

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- Compliance Tracking Program
- Environmental Audit Report
- Community Communication Strategy
- Construction Complaints Management System
- Operational Environmental Management Plan
- Operational Noise Management Plan
- Road Network Performance Review Plan
- Independent Environmental Plan

According to Westconnex planning documents:

- Work commenced in August 2017 and is scheduled to be completed in late 2018
- The facility is approximately 38 m above ground level
- Westconnex intend to monitor emissions for 12 months before the tunnel is operational and for a minimum of 24 months after the tunnel is operational.

2. Key Community Concerns

This submission outlines many concerns raised by Strathfield Councillors and the community in relation to the Westconnex Ventilation Facility (the facility).

Key concerns include:

1. The facility is in an area targeted for significant population growth – the [Parramatta Road Corridor Urban Transformation precinct](#) and the [Homebush/Strathfield Planned Precincts](#).
2. At the feasibility and planning stage for the facility, building heights in the immediate vicinity were no more than 30 metres. The NSW Government has imposed building heights of 80 metres under the PRCUT.
3. Despite over 300 objections by the local community and strong objection by Strathfield Council. The first development at the new PRCUT height of 80m was approved by the Sydney Central Planning Authority on 30 August 2018.
4. A planning proposal for two 145 m towers is being considered within a few hundred metres of the site.
5. Potential health risks to current and future residents living at these new building heights has not been assessed.

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6. If site-ready developer plans proceed at approved new heights it is anticipated that 15,000 new residents will be moving into an area within a 1 km radius of the facility in the next 3-5 years.
7. The facility is in an area with significant (and growing) traffic congestion. Public health experts acknowledge that exposure to traffic-related air pollution is linked to a range of negative health outcomes.
8. There is significant community concern regarding the cumulative public health effect of facility emissions in a highly congested traffic area. An independent public health assessment would be highly regarded by the community.
9. The economic, social and environmental impact to residents living in the immediate vicinity needs to be assessed. There are residents living within metres of the stack and it is unclear whether they have been adequately consulted or compensated.
10. The community is unaware if any environmental assessment or environmental impact statement has been undertaken.
11. There has been a significant economic impact to residents living near the facility. It is a reasonable expectation that those residents would be financially compensated for any potential reduction in home values.
12. There is significant concern that the owner/operator is in breach of its approval conditions.

3. Strathfield Council Activities

Strathfield council has undertaken a number of public interest activities, as follows:/*

3.1: Independent Study Requested

[Strathfield Council meeting minutes dated 6 February 2018](#) (P:10) recorded the following motion in relation to the facility:

Council obtains an independent and expert assessment on the (unfiltered) ventilation facility/emission stack located in Underwood Road.

The report should include any relevant information regarding the emission stack located in our community and:

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- A view of the relevant safety to our community on the unfiltered emissions
- The nature of emissions
- Any potential risks to residents or local area
- Air quality assessment
- Potential risks for future residents who will be located in high density housing in the Homebush area as part of the area as part of the NSW Government's 'Planned Precinct' policy.
- The report should also consider the increase in the height of developments planned for the Homebush and Strathfield area (e.g. Columbia Lane development at 80 m) and whether this change increases any risk to local residents

It is recommended that an appropriate, independent expert be engaged to provide a report back to council as soon as possible.

3.2: Independent Study received

[Strathfield Council Meeting agenda dated 3 July 2018](#) (P:130) tabled a report from Northstar Air Quality Pty Ltd.

The report was noted by the Council and a further report was requested, as follows:

Council assess the RMS's obligations under the original approval document and report back to the August Council meeting.

Assessment of plans and intentions around the following would be welcome:

- Compliance monitoring and tracking
- Solar access and overshadowing
- Socio-economic – particularly any impact on property prices in the vicinity of the stack
- Advice on building buffer zones
- Community and Social Management Plan
- Community cohesion plan
- Community Information, consultation and involvement
- Ambient Air Quality Goal Protocol
- Air Quality notification and Reporting
- Operational Environmental Management Plan
- Operational noise and vibration plan
- Operational noise and vibration compliance report
- Emergency Response Plan

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- Independent Environmental Audit
- The placement of an emission receptor to the west of the facility
- The placement of above-ground level receptors
- Impact of building height changes under the Parramatta Road Corridor Urban Transformation Strategy
- Impact of potential rezoning in neighbouring streets.

1. Council invite the appropriate RMS staff to a governing body workshop in August to discuss any potential community impacts and also RMS obligations in relation to the facility, and
2. Council convene a forum in September for local residents and appropriate staff from Westconnex to discuss any concerns in relation to the facility

3.3: Second independent study commissioned and received

Northstar Air Quality Pty Ltd Supplemental Report dated 18 August (Attachment B).

The report has noted some items for follow up with the facility operator:

- Development of an air quality assessment process required
- Lack of consultation with affected neighbours
- Placement of above-ground air quality monitoring stations/receptors is recommended
- Socio-economic impact of property prices in the vicinity of the facility should be undertaken
- Advice from the operators on the requirement of a building buffer zone
- Impact assessment of new building heights should be undertaken
- Impact of rezoning in the immediate vicinity

4. Conclusion

This submission has outlined many concerns and outstanding issues regarding the Westconnex ventilation facility located in Homebush.

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It is essential that the operator is meeting its approval obligations, that community concerns are addressed, and the points raised in the Strathfield Council commissioned study are considered.

It is also essential that an independent assessment of the environmental, social and economic impact of the facility is undertaken and shared with the Homebush community.

I would appreciate the parliamentary enquiry's consideration of this submission,

Regards

Councillor Maryanne Duggan
Strathfield Council
31 August 2018

