

**Submission
No 419**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

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Public Transport, Not Westconnex

Submission to

[Inquiry into the Impact of the Westconnex Project,](#)

Public Accountability Committee, NSW Legislative Council

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31 August 2018

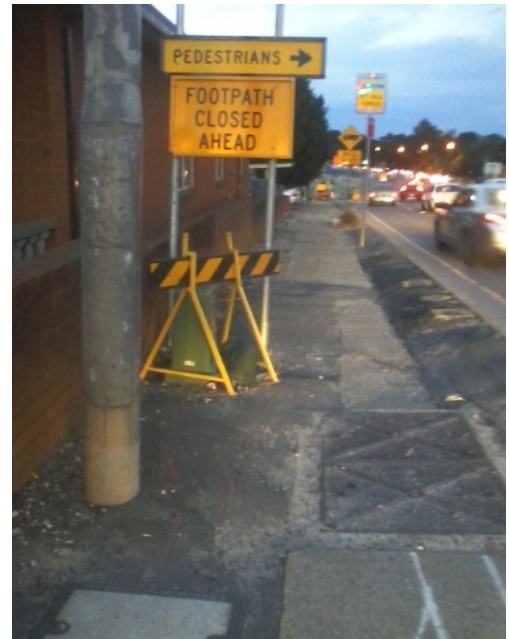
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The Public Transport Alternative

According to the analysis of 2016 Opal Data¹:

- the number of train trips taken in Greater Sydney, based on ticket sales, was estimated at around 20million/month. However, 2016 Opal Data shows that around 30 million trips were taken each month.
- 10million trips were made on the inner west light rail, which exceeds the projection for 2026. Worth noting that many of the residencies along the route have not all been completed or occupied.
- business owners believe their customers come by car, when the data shows more customers come on foot or by public transport.
- bus patronage in the walkable, affluent, car owning eastern surburbs is high.



Westconnex Construction, Wattle Street, Haberfield, July 2017

In July 2016 Opal data showed there were 21.2 million bus trips and this increased by 2.2million to 23.44 million by July 2018.²

Sydney has the lowest average motor vehicle ownership of any city in Australia.

According to the NRMA, “The private motor vehicle has been an expensive convenience for many decades, but it now sits idle for 95 per cent of the time– it is an extremely lazy and inefficient asset.” and “some statistics showing 35 per cent of millennials forgoing obtaining their driver licence”³

It is irresponsible to continue with these motorway projects In the face of increasing demand for the public transport, the scarcity and increasing value of land and trends away from private vehicles.

Induced traffic on Parramatta Road and Victoria Road, either entering, leaving or avoiding the tunnel, will in fact adversely affect Bus Services travelling along these routes contrary to claims of improved bus services. The additional traffic will impact passenger amenity walking to bus stops, while waiting for buses or attempting to cross the



Westconnex Construction, Intersection of Wattle Street and Ramsay Street, Haberfield, August 2018

- 1 Mathew Hounsell, Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, 2017, <https://www.thefifthestate.com.au/urbanism/infrastructure/open-opal-data-offers-valuable-insights-for-planners-and-developers/91083> viewed 30 August 2018
- 2 Bus Patronage - Top Level Chart Monthly Opal Trips <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/data-and-research/passenger-travel/bus-patronage/bus-patronage-top-level-chart> viewed 30 August 2018
- 3 The future of car ownership, August 2017, <https://www.mynrma.com.au/-/media/documents/reports-and-sub/the-future-of-car-ownership.pdf?la=en>, viewed 30 August 2018

road to reach bus stops or their destination after alighting from buses.

There are many places where there has been in an increase in density such as Lane Cove and no commensurate improvement in public transport. In fact a 98 year old resident reports a decline in public transport services.

Why Westconnex won't work

Westconnex is a white elephant which the NSW government is burdening the people of Sydney and the economy of New South Wales.

The business case has too many externalities, including Public Transport, Ecological Impacts, The destruction of Open Space and the Public Domain, Noise and Air Pollution and Climate Change.

The construction impacts on community have been horrendous.

And finally the evidence is that the benefits of Toll Roads have been exaggerated and the costs underestimated, resulting in the financial failure of the similar projects.

a) The adequacy of the business case for the WestConnex project, including the cost-benefits ratio

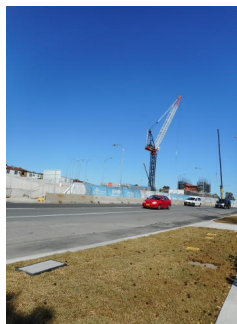
Continuing to build Westconnex for the private motor vehicle seems fool-hardy. The financial failure of the Cross City and Lane Cove Tunnels in Sydney. Even in Brisbane where average car ownership is higher, the traffic estimates for the Clem7, Airport Link and Legacy Way were all found to be too high, resulting in losses to the operators. With this evidence, continuing to build Westconnex and its proposed tentacles and even the sell off needs to be scrutinised carefully so as not to burden tax payers with costly failures.

The Westconnex Project bill has already increased from \$10billion to \$17billion, while the scope has reduced.

These sale price and cost of construction don't account for the **loss of public land** for construction or operation or land around entries of the tunnel or motorway and the

surrounding areas which are adversely affected by direct noise and air pollution. A cost needs to be put on the land dedicated and sterilised by Westconnex, particular in the Inner West.

Westconnex has delivered **narrow shared paths** without verges to buffer pedestrians and cyclists from vehicles travelling at 60kmh along Parramatta Road despite realignment and demolition of adjacent buildings between Ashfield Park and Bland Street.



Wattle Street
Haberfield,
August 2018



Truck exiting the Cintra Park,
Concord Westconnex Construction
Site, blocking all lanes of
Parramatta Road in both
directions. Photograph taken from
bus stop opposite Burwood Bus
Depot, 20 July 2017



Wattle Street,
Haberfield,
August 2018

Construction impacts have been underestimated and not mitigated, the benefits have been exaggerated and overvalued.

The M4 East portals on Wattle Street and Parramatta Road have seen the widening of these roads, which impacts the **amenity and safety of pedestrians and cyclists** trying to negotiate them. This has a negative impact on the attractiveness of walking, cycling and public transport.

Residential property in the vicinity of the numerous entries and exits to the tunnels. has lost value because of the increase in **noise and air pollution** from increased traffic generated by motorway. Westconnex recently valued three houses in Walker Street Haberfield which were to be returned to Inner West Council for community use at a meagre \$2.5million.

Contribution of motor vehicle use to **climate change** and impact on seawalls and inundation due to sea level rise.

Meanwhile, **Freight Trains** have to compete with passenger services on lines to Newcastle and Wollongong. Providing additional rail lines would provide more economic benefits and less air pollution and green house gases – but this is unlikely to have been considered in the proposal.

Evaluation of **tidal flow operation** as is the case on Victoria Road and the Sydney Harbour Bridge on M4 & M5 instead of widening. Though the bottle necks are still the on and off ramps.

The **destruction of ecological communities such as Beverly Grove Bushland** can never be recovered. The destruction of scarce green open space with its mature large trees in the inner city for the construction of roads has to be halted.

Evaluation should now be undertaken of using the already constructed Westconnex expansion of the M4 and M5 for some form of rail transport and all other road projects should be halted immediately.



Beverly Grove Remnant endangered Ecological System, Kingsgove, 2/9/16

b) The cost of WestConnex project, including the size and reasons for overruns

Gross under estimate of costs to balance against dubious benefits in the face of evidence of other failed motorway projects in Sydney, Brisbane and elsewhere.

The benefits in particular are dubious given the trend away from the private motor vehicle and driving even in cities built around the private car.

When suggested that the tunnels would get congested arbitrarily increased the size of the M4-M5 Tunnel from 2 to 3 then 4 lanes in each direction. Though it is unlikely that enough cars will be able to enter and exit the tunnels to reach capacity except at the bottlenecks of the exits and entries.

c) **Consideration of the governance and structure of the WestConnex project including the relationship between Sydney Motorway Corporation, Roads and Maritime Services, the Treasury and its shareholding Ministers**

The amalgamation of Leichhardt, Marrickville and Ashfield and placing the amalgamated council into administration. The three council areas are significantly impacted by Westconnex Stages 1,2 and 3.

The amalgamation distracted these organisations and reduced their capacity to deal with this significant project.

d) **The compulsory acquisition of property for the project**

The acquisition and destruction of the Public Domain and others who have been displaced through the compulsory acquisition process and others who have had to live in terrible conditions created by the project.

Destruction of Beverly Grove Remnant endangered Ecological System, one of the larger patches of the Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark ecological community, which had been preserved as an offset for the construction of the M5 East.



Ramsay St at Martin St, Haberfield, July 2017

Bus Stops closed and the creation of temporary bus stops on Ramsay Street and Parramatta Road Haberfield

Pedestrian Detours and Broken Footpaths on Parramatta Road between Orpington Street and Bland Street Ashfield and Haberfield saw pedestrians and cyclists forced to take much longer routes. Pedestrian detours to bus stop (at Cintra park) opposite Burwood Bus Depot.



Buruwan Park Annandale, May 2018

The **destruction and alienation of the banks of Iron Cove Creek** at its mouth in Haberfield from the intersection of Ramsay St and Martin Street to Iron Cove at Haberfield
Possible Destruction of Heritage bank facade at Haberfield and St Peters and possibly on Parramatta Road at Annandale.

The proposed **acquisition and destruction of Buruwan Park** will

- see the destruction of local provenance habitat and trees which have been cared for by volunteers supported by the Local Council since 1994.
- mean the loss of a cycle and pedestrian connection from Railway Parade Annandale to the Crescent.
- Public Transport users interchanging between the 433 Bus and the Light Rail at Rozelle Bay.
- acquisition and destruction of parts of King George Park, Rozelle

e) The recommendations of the Audit Office of New South Wales and the Australian National Audit Office in regards to WestConnex

These need to have been implemented since being made.

f) The extent to which the project is meeting the original goals of the project as articulated in 2012

Changing nature of the project – original proposal was to move freight by road to and from the airport – but these are no longer part of Westconnex

Claims that bus travel times between the Inner West and the city will be reduced and there will be improvements to bus services to Burwood and other stations⁴ seem unlikely to materialise. -

g) The relationship between WestConnex and other toll road projects including the Sydney Gateway, Western Harbour Tunnel, F6 and Beaches Link

The project keeps snow balling and bits get moved into other projects. The Rozelle Interchange has moved from being part of the M4-M5 project to the Western Harbour Tunnel.

Plans for Crescent and City West Link Annandale as part of Rozelle Interchange changed from July 2017 to July 2018 plans. New plans will impact on Mural on the Crescent and still destroy Buruwan Park.

The preferred infrastructure plan for M4-M5 link changed with trucks routed along The Crescent and Johnston Street Annandale impacting pedestrians, cyclists and people interchanging between the popular Light Rail and Bus. There are schools, homes, cafes, nursing homes along Johnston Street.

h) The circumstances by which WestConnex and the Sydney Gateway were declared to be separate projects in 2017

i) The cost of the project against its current valuation as determined through the sale of the Sydney Motorway Corporation and whether it represents a good investment for NSW taxpayers

Credit Suisse recently valued WestConnex at a meagre \$3.0bn. Putting the value of Stage 1 at

4 Performance Audit WestConnex: Assurance to the Government, From New South Wales Auditor-General, 18 December 2014 https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/351/01_Westconnex_Full_Report.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y#page=11

\$3.5bn, Stage 2 at \$2.9bn and Stage 3 at minus \$3.4bn.⁵

Previously in 2010, **Transuran bought the Lane Cove Tunnel** for \$630.5 million which was less than half of the cost of building it.⁶ In 2014 **Transurban bought the Sydney's Cross City Tunnel** for \$475 million much less than the \$1 billion the tunnel had cost to build.⁷

j) Any other related matter.

The environmental and community impacts of this project were not accurately assessed or considered by Westconnex. Addressing the issues that have arisen and even compliance has been poorly enforced.

1. Pollution from vehicles in the tunnel will enter into the atmosphere and will be trapped in the Sydney Basin, particularly in the cooler months due to the inversion layer.



Walker Street, Haberfield, 7 Jun 2018

2. Increased traffic on surface roads (vehicles will have to emerge from tunnels eventually) will increase noise and air pollution.

3. The release of the Operational Noise and Vibration Review is overdue

4. Westconnex compensated Inner West Council a meagre \$2.5million for three houses in Haberfield identified as for community use in the condition of consent.



Equipment installed in the middle of footpath, Warratah Street, Haberfield, August 2018

5. Significant construction impacts on public transport users including the relocation of bus stops, blocking of footpath, affecting buses at Concord interchange has been considered acceptable.

⁵ WestConnex – good money after bad. Posted on [31 August, 2018](https://arag.org.au/2018/08/31/westconnex-good-money-after-bad/) by [Ben Aveling](#) <https://arag.org.au/2018/08/31/westconnex-good-money-after-bad/>, viewed 31 August 2018.

⁶ Lane Cove Tunnel sold for \$630m, By Paul Tatnell, 10 May 2010 <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/lane-cove-tunnel-sold-for-630m-20100510-umn3.html>

⁷ Cross City tunnel sold to Transurban for \$475m, Sydney Morning Herald, March 2014, <https://www.smh.com.au/business/cross-city-tunnel-sold-to-transurban-for-475m-20140327-35klq.html>

6. The construction of westconnex stages 1 and 2 has destroyed endangered ecological systems, biodiversity, native animal habitat and greenspace as well as mature trees.
7. Construction Trucks travelled on local streets (Elswick and Marion Streets Leichhardt), blocked roads and parked on local streets.
8. Construction Workers parked in local streets, sometimes obstructing gates and driveways, leaving residents with nowhere to park.
9. Residents in Haberfield, Ashfield and St Peters subjected to relentless notifications over many years – area identified as suffering from construction fatigue by Stage 3 Approval. Mitigation proposals yet to be made public.
10. Community support was poor, requiring the local council to step in to provide a community forum and facilitate enforcement of the various aspects of compliance and other impacts not considered in the approval.
11. Department of Health has not provided any assistance on the health impacts of noise and air pollution or construction fatigue and the EPA has been reactive, only to community raising concerns.



Pole installed in middle of footpath, Dalhousie Street, Haberfield, August 2018

12. Ramsay Street Haberfield has been closed from time to time and the dust from construction and construction vehicles has impacted homes and businesses.



"No Westconnex Parking" Wolseley St, Haberfield August 2018

13. Trucks proposed to travel along Johnston Street Annandale, through busy shopping precinct, past schools, community centres, churches and homes



Northcote Street, Haberfield, August 2018



Westconnex Parking sign, Ash Lane, Haberfield, August 2018

14. Destruction of Buruwan Park Annandale where volunteers and the local council have created a park, with a pedestrian/cycle connection. Volunteers have undertaken bushcare on the site since 1994. ie 24 years, 40 weeks a year, 4 hours a week
15. Installation of Traffic Sign in the middle of the footpath on Warratah Street, Haberfield
16. No concern for the Public Domain in particular pedestrian or cyclist amenity of safety. Children could not be allowed to walk to school on their own because of the uncertainty of the footpath conditions
17. Noise, Dust and other Construction Impacts which residents have described as akin to a war zone.
18. Workers and Construction vehicles parking on local streets.
19. Permanent Visual Pollution of Noise Barriers in Wattle Street



Wattle Street, Haberfield August 2018

20. Noise, Dust and Light Pollution to Residential properties which are now along the realigned Parramatta Road between Ashfield Park and Bland Street in Ashfield where no noise mitigation has been provided.
21. Concerns about the Storm Water causing flooding, impacting telecommunications and electricity supply at the Intersection of Chandos Street and Parramatta Road Ashfield.
22. Installation of Utilities destroyed footpaths and affected pedestrians, carers with prams and would have left people in wheel chairs stranded.
23. Construction Vibratin noise day and night has not been effectively mitigated for homes even inside the notification areas. People outside the notification areas also experienced noise and vibration.
24. Concerns about who received Dilapidation reports and resolution of defects without costly legal proceedings is an ongoing concern.
25. Direct impact of breaking and motor vehicle headlights on properties now adjacent to Parramatta Road at Ashfield.
26. Rat runs down Chandos Street from Parramatta Road to avoid congestion and tolls.
27. Concerns about Pedestrian, Cyclist and Driver/Passenger safety at the Westconnex modified intersection of Chandos Street and Parramatta Road.
28. Impacts on buildings and retaining walls adjacent to construction work on Parramatta Road Ashfield.
29. Loss of Tree Canopy
30. Loss of amenity of properties now exposed to the re-aligned and widened Parramatta Road at Ashfield.
31. Tunnel Route for M4-M5 still not public, residents unsure what the impact will be, whether they will need or be offered dilapidation reports, whether they will be able to verify their proximity to tunel
32. Experience with stages 1 & 2 has shown that vibration and noise has extended beyond that advised or areas where residents were notified or offered relief
33. Misleading artist impressions showing few vehicles, painted green hard surfaces and trees – where the reality will be noisy, polluted and dangerous pedestrian and cycling locations.
34. Air pollution and Climate change impacts of breaking even on the investment in Westconnex rather than public transport. The health costs and impacts of rising sea level also needs to be taken into account



Test Drilling John St, Leichhardt 16/12 16



Poor use of valuable land for a massive tunnel exhaust Stack at junction of Wattle Street and Parramatta Road, Haberfield. The height of the stack will be equivalent to an 8 story building which will loom over the federation cottages in the surrounding streets.