

Submission
No 421

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX
PROJECT**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

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The Director of Public Accountability Committee
NSW Legislative Council
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Staff

RE: Inquiry investigation and report on the IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

I voice my complete opposition to the Westconnex Project, and urgently seek that you inquire into its basis, terms of reference, and its deleterious impact on Sydney and NSW. As a permanent resident for over 20 years in Balmain East, NSW I live in a family home that will suffer immense disadvantage from the loss of existing cycle, pedestrian and light rail into our Balmain Peninsula.

On behalf of myself and my family I require you to investigate the following pertaining to ANY Westconnex related projects with respect to the :

1 Basis by which a private tunnel infrastructure choice is deemed more economically/socially/environmentally sustainable and most beneficial infrastructure choice for all Sydney sider commuters/taxpayers

2 Basis by which Westconnex is deemed the best public transport infrastructure option, in comparison to other infrastructure options such as publically owned, public bus/rail infrastructure. This included investigating why our government said it wanted 'transport' but expressly DID NOT include 'rail' option be investigated and compared to Westconnex private tunnel system. I invite you to compare the current Westconnex infrastructure with the alternative infrastructure transport options and their costings that have been posed in recent years, such as by Greens MP, Jamie Parker, and ECOTRANSIT.

2 Failed basis of the governance, instruments, and legal planning laws structures of the project in its entirety, for what is critical state infrastructure . I understand that such critical infrastructure should be approved by parliament – has the correct underpinning of the Westconnex infrastructure being secured? If not, it should become null and voided. We cannot allow either for planning laws to be wound back as ministers find convenient to force through the project – any corrupt compromises should be disallowed, and the correct legislation needs to be established, to protect us to ensure accountability plus ensure recourse for improper action.

2 Basis of its business case and its viability, including a cost-benefits ratio. I understand that the decision for example to fund Stage 3 at Rozelle, predates any business case. I wish the legal basis of this be questioned and challenged, and funding be recinded. I understand that the latest business case failed, and that

City of Sydney has reported on this. Post hoc business plan decision planning and modeling is totally unacceptable – the public do not know what they are getting! Also, the paucity of related public-private sector information should not be tolerated- if public money is involved or anticipated, then the public must be allowed full access and transparency to the information.

3 Calculation of the FULL costs against its current valuation as determined through the sale of the Sydney Motorway Corporation, and whether this cost is a good investment for NSW taxpayers

4 Calculation of the FULL and cumulative costs offset by the costs to taxpayers at ALL levels ie federal, state, local councils, in relation to any: land clearing, deconstruction, pollution and waste management, rerouting of roads, loss of parklands, changes - temporary or permanent losses – of existing assets or public infra structures

5 Investigate the flawed inadequacy of the Environmental Impact statement and non independent investigation regarding the Westconnex project; and the failures for its projects to address or meet the Environmental Protection Authority in being a safe and (see the failed, unresolved mitigation study of White Bay Cruise Ship Terminal) a safeguarded project to protect immediately public risk to health, fit for residents of Sydney. Baseline pollution levels in affected neighbourhoods should be recorded and made fully available on public record, in the areas where polluting infrastructure is planned.

5 Recommendations of NSW Audit Office and Australian National Audit Office

6 The extent to which it meets its original 2012 brief and structure of the project

7 Make recommendations to investigate and bring to account any public servants that are found to be acting corruptly in this process

8 Investigate the fairness and legitimacy of the currently forced merger of the Inner West Council and its unfair bias in facilitating Westconnex major works within our municipality. This included the costs that Inner West Council will incur due to any pollution or infrastructure alternations/removal/change effects as a result of Westconnex projects, that will ultimately be borne by local residents eg pollution management, loss and damage to local parks, temporary or permanent loss of access to cycle/pedestrian/rail accessways

8 Estimate now the likely loss to tax and toll payers of any annual debt - whether the tunnel system gets its predicted customer/toll quotas or not

9 The cost of any cashback or other incentive scheme to the taxpayers of NSW

10 Impact on Aboriginal sites, such as those at Callan Park shoreline that are located within 500 metres of Westconnex construction that will decimate and pollute our vital heritage

11 Westconnex is the single greatest risk to climate change in Sydney and perhaps NSW. ALL Private Road Tunnel infrastructure IS too polluting when we have 21st century alternative – unacceptable for the heat produced, energy usage to operate tunnel system and stacks etc, as well as the vehicle emissions. Therefore we simply cannot endorse and accept the pollution consequences upon our communities and state.

12 Unacceptable separation of Westconnex and: the Sydney Gateway, the Western Harbour Tunnel, F6 and beaches links . This must be understood as one project with cumulative effects of each subsection – it must be addressed legally in this way. If Stage 3 does not go ahead, what are the implications on the other sections – clearly they are interdependent, as one system of parts!

13 and any related matters.

My family and I consider that the impact of Westconnex related projects will be most severely damaging of not only our wellbeing at our residence, but where we live work and play throughout this small peninsula and neighbourhood. We have long suffered the pollution effects of the Cruise Ships in White Bay which constitutes a failed mitigation study that remains unresolved and its duration is openended.

We are very concerned about the CUMULATIVE as well as separate pollution effects for each section of the tunnel infrastructure to occur for at least a decade that will destroy our neighbourhood, force taxpayers to pay for private toll system, risk funds being diverted to the tunnel project and away from public infrastructure that we actually need, allow unfettered number of tolls for tunnel commuters, while not serving our community needs at all.

Our home is located on the ridgeline across from White Bay, we will be faced with 24/7, the real and full brunt of damaging effects that may take up to a decade or more of infrastructure construction plus if Westconnex starts operations, including :

- a- all air and noise pollution in the clearing and the construction and the operations that will neck either side of our neighbourhood:
- b- the dredging and construction and construction operations to make tunnel sections in White Bay; the construction and construction operations that will taking over of Rozelle Rail yards plus the Rozelle-Balmain light rail corridor;
- c- the 3 unfiltered stacks;
- d- the increased traffic problems and pollution from the Victoria Rd dive site
- e- the pollution problems that will be a major hazard to those recreating and resting in the vicinity of the pollution retention facility next to the Iron Cove Bridge and King George Oval (an oval where the majority of inner west children have learned to play sports, athletics, on the water, or walked through this historic parkland full of trees that predate the Botanical gardens);

- f- the pollution effects to the parkland we recreate in that will be adjacent to the retention facility as per item (e) which will not only pollute the delightful inner west parkland called Callan Park, but it will have negative along its shoreline at Iron Cove;
- g- the unsafe levels during operation of the spaghetti tunnels regarding the production of noise and air pollution to residents outside the tunnels, to vehicles that are bottlenecked outside the tunnels due to traffic or hazards or blockages, and for inside a vehicle during normal tunnel usage.
- h- the unsafe levels during operation of the unfiltered stacks regarding the production of noise and air pollution to residents outside the tunnels, to vehicles that are bottlenecked outside the tunnels due to traffic or hazards or blockages, and for inside a vehicle during normal tunnel usage
- i- the unsafe pollution levels of all contaminants at dive sites and retention facilities regarding the production of noise and air pollution to residents and nearby waterways
- j- as the neighbourhood is largely made up of a peninsula necked by major polluting items b, c, e, and f, the pollution will not only be damaging to parks and residents based on land, but also the surrounding waterways
- k- the expected approx. 20% increase in traffic along Victoria Rd that already produced an unsustainable bottleneck during peak hours, including Saturdays until about 3pm.

These effects will be simultaneous, as the works are likely to be concurrent or closely conducted in duration, rendering our neighbourhood where we reside, work and play to be unlivable. It will subject us to horrendous noise and air pollution for many years, being the entire duration of the construction in our area plus of construction of tunnel sections 24/7 at White Bay.

We are too far from local rail or light rail, our bus system is unreliable and reducing, the cost of our relatively infrequent and early evening curfew ferry service is expensive. The Westconnex project will take away existing cycle/pedestrian/light rail access, and carve up our access to local utilities and neighbours .

Also, the economics of Westconnex is an unacceptable burden – in its tolls, its reliance on people having vehicles, its health costs – specific to locations like mine of high air and noise pollution in both the construction and the operations of this tunnel system, the failure it will bring integrated services (due to both planning of layout and the likely inclusion into contracts of non-compete clauses). Ultimately the great socioeconomic wedge that cost of the tunnel system will induce due to expensive and privately based tolls that will be too expensive for especially the working class or lower class people, and the health costs will affect the most disadvantaged. Essentially a land grab of public assets and taxpayers to fund the gap in tolls and annual ‘black hole’ costs, yet it fails to deliver what Sydney and greater Sydney need – an affordable, cheap public transport cost, integrated, sustainable, integrated public transport network.

Prior to permanently moving to Sydney to raise our family, I lived in Melbourne. Melbourne is like many other very successful, sophisticated cities that

developed its light rail and heavy rail infrastructure, kept toll roads to a minimum and not allow the Westconnex 'tail' wag the dog, for we need our integrated public rail system to not be compromised!

We are already experiencing pollution from local infrastructure works eg sore itchy eyes, smell of rotten egg gas (fine particulate air pollution that can be carcinogenic), and the CUMULATIVE effects will be horrendous and unlivable in our community. Furthermore, it will not advantage our community but WILL take away existing infrastructure that is vitally needed. The cost of using private toll system is untenable and undesirable, as is the pollution it will produce.

Sincerely