

**Submission
No 422**

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX
PROJECT**

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Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Impacts of the WestConnex Project

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I bought my home in St Peters in 1984 and have lived there ever since. My community is very important to me and I have always been involved in local resident organizations.

I have now been driven out of my home by the Westconnex project. I left Sydney on 24th April, 2018, having rented out my home at less than half the rent which would have been possible before Westconnex.

Since I left my asthma symptoms have disappeared and my blood pressure has returned to safe levels. My GP in Sydney was considering prescribing medication to reduce my blood pressure, after 2 months away it was normal and a further check by my London GP has now established it is now better than average for my age.

Probably the most significant factor influencing my decision to leave St Peters has been the effects of air pollution, including, but not limited to:

- offensive odours from the construction site (and I note that the EPA has now taken legal action re the offensive odours from the St Peters Interchange site in 2017)
- vehicle exhaust fumes ,
- dust which penetrates my home, exacerbates my asthma and forces me to spend far more time on cleaning than has ever been needed since I moved to St Peters in 1984

Also contributing to my decision to leave my home have been the long periods of penetrating noise (eg, pile driving on the Interchange site and near Bedwin Rd., St Peters).

Traffic disruptions including changes to directions of the one-way streets (Hutchinson, Lackey and Applebee) where I live made it difficult and dangerous to access my home. The direction of travel would vary throughout each day and even when the traffic controllers tried to be helpful they were inadequately trained and unable to give clear directions. This was extremely stressful and contributed to my blood pressure problems.

Inadequate traffic control with too few traffic controllers, inadequately trained, made life difficult and dangerous. Cycling and walking was particularly dangerous as traffic control seemed focused on keeping through traffic moving. However there was little help available when I needed to drive to or from my house. I was often forced to take long detours, wasting time and petrol.

Workers using vehicles have not been given adequate training in observing the Australian Road Rules and often left vehicles unlocked, with engines running. I have had to make many complaints about this and on at least one occasion, turned off a vehicle which was belching out exhaust fumes, locked it to secure it, and took the keys to Newtown Police for them to return to the company. Noise and pollution from the large number of heavy vehicles on local roads associated with the project is of particular concern given the proven dangers of diesel fumes.

Night-noise, while not a major problem in my home, has caused significant stress for many of my neighbours and this has been painful to witness – and continues to worry me even now that I am in London. I am in contact with friends and neighbours and concerned for their welfare. Failure to co-ordinate the activities of associated utilities with the WestConnex projects have increased the frequency of noise and disruption from electricity, gas and/or water agencies during the night as well as during the day.

The project closed many parking spaces, including those reserved for residents while allowing their workers to park both private and official vehicles in our small local streets. This made it difficult for me, as a senior citizen, to access shops and medical appointments, as I became afraid to take my car out because of the difficulty in finding parking when I arrived home – if I could even get back into my street with all the road closures. I was several times forced to drive down Hutchinson Street and/or Applebee Street contrary to the one-way system, with all the risks that entailed.

Signage has been appalling, too small and hard to see making it difficult for drivers and pedestrians to respond safely and in a timely manner. For example, signage on Bedwin Rd. approaching the Town &Country was rarely placed far enough back for drivers to be in the correct lane. Detour signs could lead one round in circles or out of the area with no idea how to get home. It has been difficult for me even

though I am very familiar with the local roads, impossible for family and friends who became reluctant to visit given the difficulty of accessing my street.

Notifications of forthcoming work were often inaccurate and rarely sent out in time for one to make alternative arrangements. Some were totally incomprehensible suggesting that they were written by people with no knowledge of the local area. There were often last minute changes to location or duration of works.

It has been extremely distressing to witness the loss of trees and parkland. In the summer, heat radiated from increasing expanses of bitumen and concrete has made temperatures even more uncomfortable.

As a teacher, as well as a local resident, I have observed the effects of the loss of sports grounds, requiring activities to be relocated some distance from the neighbourhood. The stench caused by digging up the old tip in 2017 made scheduled sports events at Sydney Park oval dangerous and unpleasant for students from across the region..

The so-called “New M5 Community Relations Team” only made matters worse. Complaints to them about any of these matters were dismissed. Neighbours who needed re-housing or noise abatement measures were offered earplugs when the noise from concrete-cutting was earsplitting and work safety legislation would require proper hearing protection.

It is outrageous that the government is wasting \$5billion on building Stage 3 while schools and hospitals are short of money. Why is it that the government can budget so much for this project while claiming that it is too expensive to acquire land for new schools in Ultimo, Redfern and the Eastern Suburbs? Why is it that they can build this road while many families are homeless because they fail to provide adequate public housing? Where is it that investment in public transport is in token amounts while so much money is wasted on this unwanted road?

Sydney Motorway Corporation makes small “donations” to local schools hoping to buy off critics. The SMC is exposing these children to high levels of air pollution, which could lead to lifelong health effects. Will they, like James Hardy, arrange their affairs to avoid future liability? The health effects of vehicle pollution are well known and since I have come to London, I realize how seriously European cities are taking this problem. With air pollution contributing to 40,000 deaths a year in the UK and causing long-term health problems for hundreds of thousands of people, children are especially vulnerable. There is evidence showing stunted lung growth in areas affected by traffic pollution, worldwide, leaving these children at risk of lifelong breathing disorders and earlier death.

The UK is not planning further motorways for London. Instead the Mayor of London has announced plans for an extensive “ultra-low emission zone” covering a enormous area of London over the next few years. The big construction sites I have observed are all for public transport projects.

London has become a very liveable city – I have no need for a car with frequent, safe and reliable public transport wherever I go. However I am homesick and would like to return to Sydney. Unfortunately Westconnex has made my home uninhabitable.

Jennifer Killen