

Submission
No 424

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTCONNEX PROJECT

Name: Ms Catherine Thompson

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Dear sir/ madam,

“Sydney is a city for tourists and cars,” observed the Uber driver.

Having just returned from Several years in Melbourne to an Inner West already devastated by WestConnex, I know his assessment to be true. Sydney is becoming a snarl of hyperlane tollways and Rozelle is to be its nexus.

Parklands resumed for construction. Unfiltered exhaust stacks next to schools and urban populations. A travesty of astroturfed “green space” at the old rail yards, where existing public transport infrastructure is being ripped out. The heritage suburb of Haberfield already gouged.

No thought given to international studies, such as the M11 extension in London, that show new roads create their own demand and generate higher traffic volumes, while ripping apart communities and local businesses.

No learnings from Melbourne, where public transport replaced the East West Link Road. The lack of public transport was the reason Google walked away from a commitment to a base at White Bay. Now White Bay is slated to be a cement plant. Urban regeneration? I don't think so.

World cities like London, Seoul and Paris are abandoning huge roadways. They are investing in public transport. They are focussing on clean air, greening their cities and creating liveability at human scale.

Sydney on the other hand is turning into LA, difficult to navigate without a car, disconnected from neighbourhoods, blocked out in concrete, alienating. By investing in WestConnex, you are creating at huge cost something that is staunchly opposed by communities like mine that will be devastated by its effects. We're not being NIMBYs. We simply think there are better ways.

Think of alternatives, please. Look at developing thriving outer urban hubs so that people don't have to travel to the CBD. Create work choices closer to homes. Accommodate commuters with public transport options. Value liveability as much as you prize the dollar.

Practically, look at the funding requirement. Remember the lessons of the Cross City Tunnel. Don't fund it. Don't underwrite it. Don't mortgage the future because road infrastructure build is the only solution you can imagine.

Sydney deserves more than to be just a place where all the tollways meet. As citizens, we deserve more, too. Please stop WestConnex.

Yours sincerely,
Catherine Thompson