

**Submission
No 17**

INQUIRY INTO ROAD TOLLING REGIMES

Name: Ms Julia Finn MP, Member for Granville

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Julia Finn MP Member for Granville

Portfolio Committee 6
Legislative Council
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Chair

Re: Inquiry into road tolling regimes

I am driven by the poor experiences of many of my constituents to make a submission to the Committee's Inquiry into Road tolling regimes.

I thank Members for the opportunity to provide this submission and request that I be afforded the opportunity to provide further evidence to the hearing of the Committee in July 2021.

I have spoken on behalf of many of my constituents about acquisitions and spoken in the Legislative Assembly on their behalf.

The introduction of the toll on the M4 motorway saw the operator given permission to toll the section between James Ruse Drive and Silverwater Road as traffic volumes on this section were significantly higher than between Mays Hill-Prospect. The Mays Hill to Prospect section opened in May 1992 and an initial of a \$1.50 toll was implemented.

To dodge the toll, the back streets of Granville suffered ratrunners for many, many years and contributed to poorer safety for pedestrians along with damage to parked vehicles.

The tolling concession ended on 15 February 2010, with operation of the motorway returned to the then- Roads and Traffic Authority and the toll was removed – and local people in Granville saw an almost immediate change with traffic taken off local residential, suburban streets and onto the M4.

The NSW Government proceeded with the WestConnex M4 Widening Project with the overall forecast cost of WestConnex blowing out from \$10 billion to over \$16.8 billion, despite the introduction of a toll. The widening of the 7.5 kilometres M4 section east of Church Street, Parramatta, began construction in March 2015 and was completed in July 2017. WestConnex tolls were introduced on this section one month later on 15 August 2017.

The ratrunners were back almost immediately and the suburban, residential streets of Granville, especially around the northern end of Woodville Road. My constituents



Office: 160 Merrylands Road, Merrylands NSW 2160
Phone: (02) 9637 1656 **Fax:** (02) 9897 1434 **Email:** Granville@parliament.nsw.gov.au

told me again about poorer safety for pedestrians along with damage to parked vehicles from ratrunners diverting off the M4 eastbound before the toll.

Over time, I received numerous pieces of correspondence from the Hon Duncan Gay MLC, then-Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight claiming *"WestConnex will transform the Parramatta Road Corridor. Road network measures will be conducted to look at controlling vehicle movements and improve public transport along Parramatta Road."* Despite the Minister's claims, traffic congestion on Parramatta Road from Church Street/Woodville Road, Granville to James Ruse Drive, Clyde has significantly increased from pre-toll levels and has made short local trips across or on Parramatta Road take significantly longer than previously.

Many promises were made of the benefit of the toll – many of which my constituents are still waiting to see delivered.

The M4 toll increased again on 1 January to \$8.52 – a significant change from the \$1.50 when it was introduced for the first time.

	Cars				Trucks			
	Was	Will be	\$ change	% change	Was	Will be	\$ change	% change
Westconnex M4 (max toll)	\$8.20	\$8.52	\$0.32	3.9%	\$24.60	\$25.58	\$0.98	4.0%

I have spoken on behalf of many of my constituents about tolls and spoken in the Legislative Assembly on their behalf.

To further assist the Committee in its deliberations I have reproduced some of my parliamentary contributions in the case studies below.

Case study one

(Government Information (Public Access) Amendment (Sydney Motor Corporation Bill 2016), 5 May 2016¹

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (11:51): I speak in support of the Government Information (Public Access) Amendment (Sydney Motorway Corporation) Bill 2016, and I commend the member for Strathfield for introducing this important amending legislation. It is utterly ridiculous to consider the Sydney Motorway Corporation to be a private company, beyond the reach of the obligations of the Government Information (Public Access) Act. It administers public money and its sole shareholders are the Treasurer and the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight. It should be subject to the same scrutiny as other State-owned corporations and public sector entities.

The experience of my constituents in Granville during construction of the M4 widening project is reason enough to be alarmed by the establishment of the Sydney Motorway Corporation beyond public scrutiny. I walk under the motorway to Granville station in order to catch the train to Parliament House and I appreciate the impact that the motorway and the

¹ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1323879322-72864>

current construction program has on the daily lives of residents and businesses. Initial works commenced in January 2015. This was characterised by the contractors driving around at unsafe speeds on the cycleway that runs underneath the M4 viaduct in Granville. No hoardings were in place and no safety precautions appeared to be taken, despite this occurring in the middle of the school holidays when many children were riding their bikes along the cycleway, which up to that time was a safe place to play. After this, the WestConnex Delivery Authority closed off the cycleway, despite the Minister's assurance that it would remain open during construction, forcing cyclists onto busy streets with poor visibility and parked cars.

Then the construction commenced, with heavy machinery being moved around the site outside the hours of operation approved in the development application, waking everyone up, parking across driveways and generally behaving like the neighbours from hell. While I have not had any complaints about parking across driveways for a while, I still regularly receive complaints about noise outside the hours approved in the development application. On a number of occasions I have been woken by the movement of heavy machinery at 3 o'clock or 4 o'clock in the morning. Even though I live three or four blocks away, sometimes my street is used as an access route by the construction vehicles. It is bad enough on my street; I can only imagine how much worse it is living next to the construction noise every day and often at night.

On one occasion, people were woken at 2.00 a.m. by chainsaws removing trees and mulching them—yes, operating a mulcher at 2.00 a.m. next to someone's home. The immediate neighbour, Issa Nasrallah, contacted me later in the morning and the matter was raised in the other place. My colleague the Hon. Walt Secord asked the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight about residents being awakened at 2.00 a.m. by chainsaws chopping down trees as part of the M4 widening project. The Minister's reply was rather evasive, although he later told the Parliament that the work met the requirements under the environmental protection licence granted for the work. He also claimed that the work was in an industrial area hundreds of metres from anyone's home, rather than admitting that trees were cut down at 2.00 a.m. outside someone's home. This was absolutely not the case.

To make matters worse, the construction work has caused extensive cracking in adjoining homes. While a dilapidation report was completed prior to commencement of construction, requests from neighbours to document and compensate or remediate cracking are falling on deaf ears. Who can forget the gigantic mounds of asbestos-contaminated fill that were brought to and stored on the site, next to people's homes, without any notification, with only inwards facing "Danger asbestos" signs? In September last year I was advised that the area was being sealed off, with tarpaulins placed on mounds of earth. I examined them myself from the nearby footpath and noticed that they were not even completely covered, with the base of the mounds of contaminated fill exposed and revealing golf ball size lumps of dry clay.

When it came time to remove the asbestos, the WestConnex Delivery Authority did not even bother to wet it before bringing in the earthmoving equipment. Instead it just used air quality-monitoring equipment, which would document rather than prevent the bonded asbestos being broken and fibres being dispersed. Yet again, the heavy earthmoving equipment arrived before 6.00 a.m., making noise outside the approved hours of operation. Workers on the site were not wearing any protective equipment for asbestos removal. Pedestrians were not diverted from the adjacent footpath either. I know this because I came to see it for myself after receiving yet another complaint from residents in adjoining properties.

Make no mistake, the way the WestConnex Delivery Authority has gone about dealing with the public during construction of the M4 widening stage is reason enough to support this bill and ensure that the Sydney Motorway Corporation is accountable to the public. The negotiations around acquisition also raise alarms. In the Granville electorate only 10 homes were acquired for the M4 widening project, despite many more being directly affected—even

including a number that would be completely overshadowed. The homes that were compulsorily acquired are located on the path of the widened motorway and their acquisition was absolutely necessary. Yet it took public embarrassment on Channel 7 for WestConnex not to force a family with six children to move out on the date of settlement, a few days before Christmas 2014.

This happened to the Hussein family from Onslow Street, Granville. Despite being well aware that the family needed the proceeds of settlement to settle on their new home that same day, an entirely unrealistic rental was proposed: \$600 per week for a three-bedroom fibro house, which on the private rental market at that time would have been worth \$450 to \$480 a week. What of the adjoining neighbours whose quality of life will be destroyed when the new viaduct is constructed? They are not eligible to have their homes compulsorily acquired. This means they can request an acquisition and are ineligible to be compensated for moving expenses and stamp duty. At times, efforts to negotiate with those owners have been characterised by insulting valuations and vague offers attached to threats to withdraw the offers. In one case I am aware of, a verbal offer has been made but nothing has been received in writing over many months, except a threat that the offer must be accepted by a certain date or it will be withdrawn—yet the offer was not formally made until a few days before the closing date.

WestConnex is the biggest infrastructure project in Australia, and if the evidence from construction and negotiations with neighbours is anything to go on the entire project needs more public scrutiny, not less. Quite ironically, the first aspect of the M4 widening project to be completed was the tollgate on the James Ruse Drive exit, which is used by residents of Granville, Parramatta and Rosehill. The road is an utter goat track, yet the tollgate stands proudly telling us that shortly we will have to pay \$4.21 for the privilege of driving on a road that was paid off in 2010. The cost of widening the road is \$500 million. The toll amounts to more than \$2,000 a year for commuters who use the M4 to go to and from work each day.

The toll will increase at 4 per cent per annum every year unless the inflation rate is even higher than that—a scenario that is unlikely to occur under current economic projections. The toll will be in place for decades, with no explanation of the apparent over-recovery of construction costs that is clearly happening, and no explanation from this Government as to why it is breaking its promise not to toll roads that are already constructed. With the level of secrecy and obfuscation that has occurred so far on the WestConnex project, it is absolutely clear that the Sydney Motorway Corporation must be subject to the Government Information (Public Access Act).

Case study two

Motion accorded priority, 3 August 2016 WestConnex²

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (16:11): I oppose the motion moved by the member for Seven Hills for many reasons. The cost of WestConnex has blown out from \$10 billion to \$17 billion. The business case has been kept secret, so the \$20 billion in benefits is probably fanciful. I would not be surprised if most of the 10,000 jobs predicted to accompany the construction of WestConnex were at all the tyre repairers around town, because at the moment the road is a goat track. The M4 is awful to drive on at the moment. To add insult to injury, the Government is bringing back the tolls. The M4 toll was removed in 2010; it is being reinstated from next year. The tollgates were the first part of the widening project to be finished. That

² <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1323879322-91308>

was a lovely Christmas present last year: as drivers came off James Ruse Drive the tollgate was there, waiting to take money out of our wallets every time we used that road.

The member for Seven Hills said that he will not listen to anything the Opposition has to say on WestConnex. That has been the Government's attitude every time I have raised in this House, or directly with the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, the appalling treatment of Granville residents who live near the M4 widening project. Those people found asbestos dumped next to their houses. A sign saying, "Warning: dangerous asbestos" was placed facing into the site. Residents received no notification. When the asbestos was finally removed, workers did not bother to hose it down. They arrived before 6 a.m., waking everybody up with the enormous trucks that took the asbestos away. Workers also woke residents at 2 a.m. when using chainsaws and a mulcher to chop down trees right next to a house.

The company then had the hide to advise the Minister that the work had been done a kilometre away from the house. It was not; it was right next to the fence, as was seen on ABC television. People whose houses have been overshadowed by the huge overpass have been refused compulsory acquisition of their properties. They have been told to apply for voluntary acquisition. They have been told to agree to something that has not been put in writing. They have also been told that they will have to pay all moving expenses. This is despite the fact that their houses will be uninhabitable for anything except mushrooms. Other residents whose houses are being acquired have been told to pay a \$10,000 bond to stay in their house.

Ms Jodi McKay: And the Minister agreed that he stuffed up.

Ms JULIA FINN: That is true. People have been asked to pay a \$10,000 bond to stay in a \$500 a week house where the vibrations are so bad that every time a resident leaves the house they come back to find that paintings have fallen off the walls and cracks have become worse. It is an absolute disgrace. [*Time expired.*]

Case study three

Motion to be accorded priority: M4 toll, 23 May 2017³

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (15:47): The new toll on the M4 has just made the people of Western Sydney furious. This is a big new tax on 1.5 million people to fund a road from Rozelle to St Peters. It is an utter rip-off. It is a new toll on an old road. Dennis Cliche, who this Government is paying \$1 million a year, could not even answer questions at the tolling inquiry about it. He does not know how many cars are going to be on that road every day. He has no idea what is going on, but from later this year people in Western Sydney will be paying \$4.56 to travel in each direction on the M4. It is going to go up by four per cent a year for the next 43 years. It is an utter disgrace. The widening of the M4 will be paid off in about three years. After that—for the next 40 years—the toll will be robbing people's pockets.

What we get from this Government is a one-month respite. It is not a grace period; it is a disgrace period. It is a kick in the guts. This is an utter embarrassment. People in Western Sydney are absolutely furious. Whenever I set up a mobile office, people come up to us and ask if they can sign our petition. Almost 15,000 people have signed a petition opposing the reintroduction of a toll on the M4. The toll was lifted in 2010, when the road was paid off, and, lo and behold, the Liberals are bringing it back. We will have this toll until the 2060s. This is

³ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1323879322-97666/link/126>

an absolute disgrace, having a new toll on a previously paid off, untolled road. The toll will increase at a rate well above the rate of inflation and remain for the next 43 years.

People are absolutely furious and this Government can only offer them a one-month grace period. The Minister for WestConnex should be ashamed of himself. I do not know how he can even walk down the street in Penrith without being screeched at and screamed at. Maybe that is why he is never there. People in my electorate are absolutely furious that the short trip to Strathfield will cost \$4.56. It has already gone up from \$4.21 and the road has not even opened yet. It is an absolute goat track and we will only get a one-month grace period before a 43-year toll. This toll is an utter disgrace and an utter rip-off. The Government should be embarrassed and should withdraw it now. They should tear up the contract. They should have never entered into this contract. It is an absolute mess.

Case study four

Private Members Statement, 21 June 2018⁴

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (18:18): In its budget the Berejiklian Government announced that it was proceeding with the privatisation of Sydney Motorway Corporation. When Sydney Motorway Corporation is privatised in August it will lock in increasing tolls on the M4 for years to come. Western Sydney has been stung with a new M4 toll, property owners in my electorate have been treated with contempt and the Sydney Motorway Corporation has been used to shield WestConnex from public scrutiny. The Leader of the Opposition announced earlier today that Labor's plan to combat mismanagement, incompetence and waste includes a judicial inquiry into WestConnex to establish exactly how these projects have gone so wrong, and will provide full public accountability. The widened M4 section of the WestConnex project cost around \$500 million, and this money will be recouped by the Government through tolls in less than three years. But the M4 toll will stay on for decades to effectively pay for the other stages of the road project, including the M4-M5 link and the widened M5.

The toll will go up every year, at or above the rate of inflation, for 43 years. M4 traffic dropped by 32 per cent in the first full week of tolls to approximately 942,000 trips compared with average volumes in the weeks before the charges were introduced in August 2017. It caused chaos across my electorate, with people unable to get out of their driveways on the choked rat runs through Granville. In November the chief executive of Sydney Motorway Corporation said traffic figures had dropped 25 per cent on the M4 since tolling started compared to a forecast 40 per cent drop, so it was "a really great story". No Western Sydney motorist agrees.

New figures reveal that since the toll was reintroduced there are on average 42,000 fewer vehicles using the motorway every day. By May this year 154,000 cars and trucks were using the M4 per day compared to an average of 196,000 vehicles before the toll was introduced. The Berejiklian Government said the business case projections were for 164,000 cars per day by 2031. Whichever way you look at it, drivers are turning off in droves to avoid paying the toll between Parramatta and Homebush, and they are turning off at Church Street. There is the cost of paying the toll. There is the unfairness of paying a toll for a road which has already been built and the concerns about safety on the M4. Motorists exiting the M4 at Church Street are taking back roads or rat runs or opting to take the jammed Parramatta Road,

⁴ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1323879322-102820/link/126>

which makes short local journeys take ages. My constituent Despina got in touch with me about the queuing at the Church Street off-ramp. She said:

Just the other day I was driving to work and day-care with my 2 year old son. I was travelling in the second lane from the left at 80km/hr. The left lane was banked up and at a standstill. A ute in that lane pulled out in front of me and I had to slam on my breaks. It was only because of my quick reflexes that a serious accident did not occur. I was very shaken up by this incident. Unfortunately, I have seen this happen many times to other drivers. It is not safe for a lane on the freeway to constantly be at a standstill whilst others are going 90km/hr. Surely something must be done about this before a serious accident occurs.

Anyone who drives on the M4 in the morning is caught in the queue to exit at the Church Street off-ramp that stretches back kilometres. It is frustrating as the traffic slows to a crawl in the area and scary when other motorists cut into traffic as experienced by Despina. It is so dangerous and accidents are so frequent that people have started calling the off-ramp "crash alley". The Government has no solution to this. In fact the Government wants this to occur because it deters people from taking the off-ramp. They stay on the road and pay the toll to avoid getting stuck in that queue. And the Premier says she wants more and more people to pay the toll.

This Government is obsessed with privatisation. With Sydney Motorway Corporation to be privatised, the Government will lock in increasing tolls on the M4 for years to come. The Government's toll relief package has been exposed as a huge con job. As appalling as it is—the idea of the Government funding incentives for drivers to use private motorways—last night Channel 7 reported that 97 per cent of Sydney toll users will not spend enough to qualify for the scheme, and most who will do not live in Western Sydney. So Western Sydney motorists will keep paying, and paying, and paying—both the toll and registration.

Not only has the Berejiklian Government put in place a toll that will go up every year at or above the rate of inflation for 43 years on the M4, but it is hitting Western Sydney with a double whammy by reducing alternative public transport options for people to choose. Residents believe this is a con to get them to pay the toll. The Government's new train timetable means Western Sydney residents face longer commuting times to the city and an increased number of interchanges for services, making trips longer and far more inconvenient. For instance, western line trains no longer stop at Granville, Auburn, Harris Park and Clyde from 6.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. on weekdays; passengers are no longer able catch direct trains to any stations further west than Parramatta; and passengers have slower trains to the city due to their stations being skipped. The Berejiklian Government has the wrong priorities. The people of New South Wales deserve better.

Case study 5

Private Members Statement, 20 September 2018⁵

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (18:14): A few months ago the Premier claimed she and the Liberal Party "own" Granville. That kind of arrogance is one of the main reasons the Liberals lost the seat of Wagga Wagga after 61 years, with a massive 29 per cent swing. So what has this level of Liberal arrogance and hubris done for Granville in the last long eight years? Westmead Public School has 1,620 students, it is the largest in the State and it is

⁵ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1323879322-103678>

growing by hundreds of students every year. The Government has announced a new school, but no funding and no site. The Government has reintroduced the loathsome M4 toll—on a road the residents of Western Sydney have already paid for, which was then privatised to lock the tolls in until 2060. That moved 42,000 cars a day off the M4 onto Parramatta Road and our local roads to avoid the M4 toll. It created a dangerous mess at the Church Street off-ramp, which was known as "crash alley". To fix that mess, instead of getting rid of the toll, barriers were put in to make it harder to get off the M4.

When she was transport Minister, the Premier cancelled 100 train services a week at Granville in 2013, including the 28-minute city express services. In 2017 this Government took Granville off the Western Line altogether during daytime services, blowing out peak-hour travel times to 43 minutes—a 50 per cent increase in travel times for train commuters from Granville station. In my first few weeks in Parliament I called on the Minister for Transport to review the train timetable and to reinstate the rail services at Wentworthville, Westmead, Granville and Guildford stations as a priority. Instead, the Government made it worse. Thanks, Minister Constance.

As well as cutting train services and choking our local streets and Parramatta Road with cars avoiding the M4 toll, the Government has forced 5,000 units on us as part of the Parramatta Road Revitalisation Strategy. Every time I am at Granville station, people come up to me and ask, "Whose fault is that?", pointing at the new units built just next to the train line. I let them know that the design, materials and colour palette are largely the developer's fault and that the council approved it, but the State Government decided the height and bulk it wanted and drove the redevelopment of the area. Council wanted taller, leaner, more elegant buildings, but the State Government decided that 26-storey bulky-looking towers constitutes a good design outcome.

The Government has shut Parramatta pool, which people from Westmead and dozens of local schools used, and the Government-appointed Cumberland Council administrator tried to shut Wentworthville and Guildford pools too until the community fought back. Granville South Public School had a roof that leaked so badly the water came through the electrical wiring and the classrooms had to be evacuated. I succeeded in getting them a new roof, but until then the Government just ignored the problem and replaced the rotten carpet instead.

Like so many places in New South Wales, the Granville electorate has a 10-year wait for social housing, and this Government is selling off more homes than it is building. Our local hospital at Westmead, the State's biggest, is chronically understaffed, with maternity leave positions not backfilled and surgery shutdowns being extended—instead of from Christmas to New Year it is from Christmas to Australia Day, and instead of the Easter weekend, it is often from Easter to Anzac Day. In fact, the number of New South Wales patients waiting for elective surgery has reached an all-time high of almost 78,000. That is an increase from 66,000 in 2011.

The Government closed our motor registry at Merrylands and now sends everyone to Auburn. The Government also sold the historic Granville TAFE buildings on South Street and has destroyed TAFE across the State. Since 2011 the New South Wales Government has cut funding for education and training, sacked TAFE teachers and support staff, cut TAFE courses, slashed class contact times and drastically increased student fees. Over the past year alone 72,105 fewer people were enrolled in TAFE in New South Wales, even though the Government could see how dodgy private vocational education providers can be with examples such as Granville's Unique International College, where fewer than 1 per cent of students graduated and which has been in the news again this week. That college is just down the road from the great and beautiful TAFE buildings this Government emptied and sold off.

Power prices have gone through the roof since this Government pushed through privatisation and retail price deregulation, going up 20 per cent last year alone. The Liberals promised prices would go down, knowing full well that they would not. In suburbs like Granville, Guildford and Merrylands these huge increases have a massive impact on the cost of living. All that is on top of the stadium splurge. The Government is about to demolish Allianz Stadium just so the people of New South Wales cannot send the Government a message about its priorities next March.

According to a number of 2ME listeners from Granville, last week, in the aftermath of the Wagga Wagga by-election, the former member for Granville Tony Issa told 2ME—and it was in Arabic, so I am paraphrasing 2ME's translation—that the people of Wagga got it wrong and that they should not have thrown out the Liberal Party, which had served them so well for 61 years, just because of a corruption scandal. Wow. The voters never get it wrong. No wonder the people of Wagga Wagga booted out the Liberal Party. March 2019 cannot come soon enough, when the people of New South Wales will put schools and hospitals before stadiums and boot out the Berejiklian-Barilaro Government.

Case study six

Motion accorded priority: M4 East Tunnel, 30 July 2019⁶

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) (15:55): It is shameful that the House is debating the M4 East Tunnel today when this morning at the M4 off ramp at Church Street in Parramatta—the off ramp that motorists used to avoid paying the toll—a fatal accident occurred. The toll at that off ramp should never have been reinstated. As a result of the accident, the off ramp was closed and motorists were forced to pay the toll, even those who did not need to travel further. For the Government to move this ridiculously self-congratulatory motion on the day a person has died because of the actions of the Government in reinstating the toll is tasteless beyond belief. For Government members to suggest that the M4 is safer is disgusting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Mulgoa will come to order.

Ms JULIA FINN: Since the toll was reinstated on that stretch of road I have been complaining about the dangerous off ramp. It has taken a fatal accident for any action to be taken. What action has been taken? Some very minor changes were implemented but they are not enough. Hundreds and hundreds of accidents have occurred at the off ramp since the toll was reinstated. The Government's business case predicted that people would leave the M4 in droves to avoid paying the toll. Each day 40,000 cars leave the M4 and thousands of those leave at the Church Street off ramp. That off ramp is incredibly dangerous. The police, the council and the commuters say it is dangerous. I have pointed out in writing and in this place many, many times that the off ramp is incredibly dangerous. At 8.30 this morning there was a multiple car, truck and motorcycle accident and the motorcyclist died. Yet this afternoon Government members boast in this House about how they have brought safety to commuters and how great the M4 road is. That is utterly disgraceful.

For Government members to suggest that the M4 Tunnel project is great for western Sydney is appalling. It costs \$7.89 to travel through all the tunnels and along the widened M4 which the residents of western Sydney already had paid for. The tolls will be paid until 2060. It will cost commuters over \$3,700 a year to drive to and from work. When they get through

⁶ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1323879322-106328>

that tunnel they will hit a wall of traffic on the City West Link. That happened to me this morning when I drove through the tunnel and that is what happens to everybody. Instead of taking traffic off Parramatta Road, as Government members have claimed today, it has worsened traffic conditions on Parramatta Road because people are avoiding the new tunnels in droves. As we have seen time and time again, the entrances to the tunnels are dangerous. People are confused by them and are reversing dangerously to avoid going into them. To talk about the M4 East as a win for safety is ridiculous.

If Government members want to pat themselves on the back, they should not choose to do so on the day a fatal accident has occurred because the toll has been reinstated. The Church Street off ramp was not dangerous until reinstatement of the toll. Now it is incredibly dangerous. For months I have been seeking an update and no-one will tell me the Government's plan to fix it. I have been told it will be fixed by November but I do not know what the Government is planning to do. My constituents ask me about it all the time because they use it every day. The M4 traverses my electorate but I cannot get a decent answer from this Government about what it will do to make the road safer. Government members may pat themselves on the back all they like but the M4 toll is an unfair tax on the people of western Sydney—and Sydney is the most tolled city in the world. The Government is making the private sector incredibly rich at our expense. The widened M4 will be paid off by the end of the year but we will be paying to use that road until 2060. That is not fair.

The Church Street off ramp is not safe. It is absolutely astounding that on the first day back in Parliament, when someone has died in a fatal accident, Government members are patting themselves on the back about this project. This project is ridiculously expensive. For the first time ever, not only are we paying for the privilege to use the road but when it is paid off we will be paying for decades to come, with the money going towards other sections of the road. This road is highway robbery. Even worse, today the last off ramp motorists are able to use to avoid paying the toll was closed. [*Time expired.*]

I thank the committee for the opportunity to make this submission and I look forward to attending the June hearings to further assist Committee members in this Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Julia Finn MP
State Member for Granville

17 May 2021