

Submission
No 58

**INQUIRY INTO ACQUISITION OF LAND IN RELATION TO
MAJOR TRANSPORT PROJECTS**

Name: Mr Raymond and Sandra Greig

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Partially
Confidential

Submission to the Inquiry into the Acquisition of land in relation to major transport projects

Raymond and Sandra Greig

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for establishing this Inquiry. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to give evidence to the Inquiry.

Our property at **St Peters** was Compulsory Acquired for WestConnex.

The Greig family had owned the property since 1946. Raymond and two other siblings were born in the house. We inherited the property in 1985, and we had lived there since.

The property was in immaculate condition and we had completed significant renovations to the house, which consisted of 5 bedrooms, large attic storage space, large 4-car garage with workshop, landscaped front and rear gardens, water tanks, rear lane access to **St Peters**, and located directly across the road from Sydney Park. I have attached photos of our home.

The RMS approached us on Melbourne Cup Day in November 2014 with the intention to Compulsory Acquire our home. We did not object to the acquisition of our home.

We attended a meeting with RMS and WestConnex representatives. Several neighbours raised concerns about media reports that homeowners in Haberfield were not being offered full market value for their homes, and that most were unable to purchase a comparable home in the area.

The representatives assured us that we **“would be well looked after”** and that we would receive **“full market value”** for our property. We were led to believe we would be able to purchase a comparable home in the area. We were also told that we would be given 10% of the value to help us purchase another property. The meeting was amicable and we left feeling confident that the RMS would treat us fairly. We engaged **Slater and Gordon** from Slater and Gordon to represent us.

In April 2015, the RMS made an offer of \$1,425,000. We considered this a low and unreasonable offer, and obviously rejected the offer. We knew our home was unique and it would be impossible to purchase a comparable home with this low offer. We were upset that the RMS had lied to us.

We also disputed the valuation of \$1,600,000 obtained by Slater and Gordon, which we also considered to be low and unreasonable. We knew there weren't many properties in the area that were similar to ours, and upset that our property was compared to smaller properties. We were told it was too late to have the property re-valued. We were obviously upset with this response.

During this period, we heard that the RMS had acquired a smaller 3-bedroom house at **St Peters** for \$2,400,000. We asked **Slater and Gordon** from Slater and Gordon why this acquisition wasn't included in our valuation and RMS offer. (attached)

We requested Slater and Gordon raise the \$2,400,000 acquisition with the RMS, and were advised, **“the RMS does not take Compulsory Acquisitions into consideration”**. We started to lose confidence in Slater and Gordon. We were stressed and anxious, and felt powerless.

The RMS then came back with a second offer of \$1,600,000 in June 2015, which reflected the valuation obtained by Slater and Gordon that we had previously disputed. We were not willing to accept this low offer. At no time did we get the opportunity to negotiate with the RMS.

When we asked _____ why the RMS offer was so low, he advised that **“this was it”** and **“they would not go any higher”**. We were led to believe the RMS would not make a better offer, and told we would have to go to the Valuer General and Land & Environment Court if we didn't accept the offer, that it would likely take another year and be considerably expensive to resolve the matter, and that we might not get a better outcome.

We believe that the RMS and Slater and Gordon should have taken the acquisition of **St Peters** into consideration as the RMS had determined \$2,400,000 was the ‘market value’ for the property. This better reflected the true market value of properties in St Peters. We believe it was unreasonable that the RMS only offered us \$1,600,000 as the offer clearly did not represent the true market value of our property. **A difference of \$800,000, how is that possible?**

We believe the RMS have deliberately and unfairly reduced the market value of our home, and forced us to accept a low and unreasonable offer. This contradicted what they initially told us, that we “would be well looked after” and able to purchase a comparable home in the area.

Raymond wanted to appeal the offer, but we weren't in a position to fight this due to health issues. My anxiety and blood pressure was sky-high as a result of the acquisition of our home, and my doctor was concerned that I was close to having a stroke. We had no choice.

We reluctantly accepted the offer as we couldn't see ourselves pursuing this matter any further, and we would have been forced into a rental situation with no certainty or ability to purchase another home. **We were completely powerless and there was no negotiation with the RMS. They were particularly cruel to us, and abused our trust and their authority.**

We knew there weren't any other suitable comparable properties in the St Peters area that we would be able to purchase with the unreasonable amount offered by the RMS, and that we were being priced out of the market because of delays in receiving the payment. We were upset that we would not be able to remain in the area, and had no choice but to move away from St Peters. We eventually purchased a home in Woy Woy on the Central Coast.

The RMS made it difficult to purchase another property as they also refused to release any funds – even though they told us they would release 10% once the offer was accepted. We had to arrange bridging finance and pay interest. We also had to borrow from friends and family to cover our moving expenses at the time.

We were shocked and upset to learn that another resident who owned a smaller 3-bedroom property received \$1,850,000, and was able to purchase another home in the area. We couldn't understand why they received considerably more compensation, and wondered if they were able to take advantage of the \$2,400,000 acquisition of _____, **St Peters**. It wasn't fair at all.

We are still very upset about the way that the RMS has treated us, and that they deliberately cheated us out of compensation for our home. They lied and turned our lives upside down, and took advantage of us because we are elderly. They could see the acquisition was causing considerable stress, and there is no doubt we were bullied and forced into accepting a low and unreasonable offer.

We were kicked out of our home, not allowed to remove sentimental items, and treated with disrespect. We believe they took advantage of us because we are elderly, and they were aware of our health problems.

Our health has suffered significantly as a result of the Compulsory Acquisition of our property. Raymond was forced to retire early due to the stress related to everything going on. We are still angry and traumatised by the experience, and have not been able to visit St Peters since leaving as it is too stressful and triggers negative emotions.

Added to the stress of the acquisition and losing our home, we have lost of our neighbours who were our closest friends. On public holidays we would have a street party behind the terrace houses in Sydney Park. We would have a BBQ and everyone would bring different food and drinks. We would discuss the latest news and talk about the acquisitions and how the WestConnex project was affecting everyone. The RMS had destroyed this sense of community.

We also provided a submission to the Inquiry into WestConnex in 2018 and upset that the RMS and NSW Government dismissed our concerns. They did not accept responsibility for their actions, even listening to the RMS representative made it clear they did not care about what they had done to us - even after assuring us we "would be well looked after". The RMS had intentionally deceived us and deliberately cheated us - and we are upset that they got away with it.

We have also seen in media reports that the Government continues to cheat homeowners out of compensation, and upset that the Government has paid considerable compensation well above market value for properties - especially after we were offered a low and unreasonable amount, whether it's because of bias or being able to afford expensive lawyers. It's a continued reminder that we were treated unfairly, and that the Government has not been held accountable.

We ask for a full review of our acquisition, and to be recompensed the compensation that the RMS and NSW Government have cheated from us.

We sincerely hope that this Inquiry will finally make the acquisition of homes fairer and compensate people the full market value of their properties - not what they want to pay because they are trying to cut costs and meet budgets.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the Inquiry. We hope the Inquiry can resolve this matter so we can finally move on with our lives.

Kind regards,
Raymond and Sandra Greig