

**Submission
No 17**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE ROZELLE INTERCHANGE

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WalkSydney Inc

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Via email: portfoliocommittee6@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Committee Members,

Inquiry into the Impact of the Rozelle Interchange

As the peak body advocating for walking in the Greater Sydney region, WalkSydney welcomes the opportunity to provide input into this Parliamentary Inquiry.

Victoria Road's hostile, polluted and noisy environment is preventing people walking

The project takes place in some of the most heavily walked suburbs of Sydney. In Leichhardt SA3, 36.5% of all trips were walked by foot end to end, and a further 25% walked part of the way (HTS 19/20). In neighbouring Canada Bay (Drummoyne) this was 24.4% (+26.2%). In other words any impact on walking affects 50-60% of local residents' trips. In Pyrmont 90% of trips are by foot.

People on Victoria Road are walking on narrow, 1m wide, cluttered footpaths or shared paths, sharing the limited space with riders between fences near 6 lanes of traffic travelling at 60km/hr. There are dozens of obstacles in the footpath. The environment is polluted, the noise is deafening and there is no shade. It is hostile, unfriendly and frankly unsafe for adults, let alone children.

The path should be 4x wider and include a safe separated cycleway, to be safe and comfortable according to the NSW Cycleway Design Toolbox. Access is also hampered by limited crossings over Rozelle rail yards, around the former power station and across Blackwattle Bay, which the project has largely left unchanged. Prior to the Rozelle Interchange construction people could cross Victoria Road, now they need to take an additional detour of hundreds of metres. While car trips have gotten faster, walking trips are longer, less safe, and remain squeezed on treeless, noisy, polluted corridors.



The project has also added congestion and made public transport slower on Victoria Road, as buses get slower people stop using public transport, and the associated 25% of linked walking trips will drop. In an area that should be a model for public transport, walking and riding supporting decarbonisation, WalkSydney expects walking will go backwards.

There is a significant “Opportunity Cost” to the community of the motorway investment

The second factor affecting walking is the opportunity costs of the project. Transport for NSW's own documents, including the Healthy Streets Investment Program Strategic Business Case for walking, and the Greater Sydney Cycling and Micro-Mobility Investment Program Business Case for cycling, highlight significant benefits of improving infrastructure for walking in town centres and creating strategic cycling corridors.

These projects could have been fully funded for a fraction of the \$17 billion spent on WestConnex, roughly \$200 million per year over 10 years. This funding could have been used to implement much-needed local walking and cycling improvements, including those necessary to connect customers to the Metro West, such as in Five Dock.

By connecting Five Dock to the Victoria Road Strategic Cycling Corridor, a safe separated cycleway could have been created, providing an excellent cycling route to the metro and job centres across the city. Such an investment would have supported the government's investment in the metro and helped alleviate congestion as Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs) are developed. Additionally, funding could have been allocated to extend the Harbour Foreshore Walk from Pyrmont to Parramatta as originally planned.

Whether or not you can ‘fix’ Rozelle Interchange, we therefore urge the inquiry to look beyond traffic - motorways are not the right solution for Sydney's transport needs. Experts will provide you with details of what went wrong with the design and modelling of WestConnex, but more can be done than polishing the proverbial.

Even against its own objectives, WestConnex fails, including:

- Objective 4 (O4) - Cater for the **diverse travel demands** along these corridors that are best met by road infrastructure
- Objective 5 (O5) - Create **opportunities for urban renewal, improved liveability and public and active transport improvements** along and around Parramatta Road
- In relation to O5, the Department of Planning also imposed a condition (B34, "at least two lanes of Parramatta Road, from Burwood to Haberfield, are to be solely dedicated for the use of public transport...") which has not been met.



We urge the inquiry to shine a light on TfNSW failure to deliver for walking and cycling, and **recommend that TfNSW reallocate at least 1 lane of traffic on both Victoria and Parramatta Roads for a continuous safe separated cycleway.**

This would be a win of climate change, walking and bus passengers too, as the ‘shared’ footpaths are inadequate, crowded and unsafe. Walking and riding are sustainable modes of transport with a tiny carbon footprint. In terms of public transport, on Victoria Road the Inquiry should **insist on ‘bus bypasses’ at Lyons Road, Robert St and onramps, and reallocation of existing road space on Parramatta Road for buses** to meet O5 and planning condition B34, rather than the monstrous widening proposed.

While attention has been on traffic snarls and delays to cars, do not not lose sight of the bigger picture, the open space lost to children living in Rozelle, Balmain, White Bay, Glebe and Pyrmont, the missed opportunity for better public and active transport, to have started on a path to Net Zero, not inducing more car travel.

To this end, *WalkSydney* makes the following the overarching observations and recommendations to avoid this happening again -

1. **Legislate an independent planning inspector** for state projects,
2. **Fund active and public transport** over roads,
3. **Legislating Transport’s purpose** and user hierarchy, and
4. **Fix the rules** by which Transport, Planning and Treasury plan, consult on and assess road projects

NB: To the extent that observations below draws on the experience of the United Kingdom, it is because they are a decade ahead of Australia in implementing climate change action, creating better governance of transport, transparency of decision making and re-prioritising transport investment to create better neighbourhoods and local places, instead of more roads.

Observation	Desired Outcome
<p>State government agencies are unable to temper poor cabinet-approved schemes</p> <p>Government bureaucrats will not refuse Planning or delay a project through an INSW gateway process once approved by cabinet <i>regardless of its flaws</i>. This implied pathway to approval means there is no brake on bad projects.</p>	<p>Set up a genuinely independent review of all road projects, and a permanent independent planning approval body</p> <p>Make all current major road building projects subject to a proper, transparent review, modelled on the English Roads Review. If project costs escalate, benefits are eroded or not delivered (because the infrastructure that delivers them is unfunded), the projects should be halted.</p>



<p>Additionally when agencies like the Department of Planning are skeptical of Transport for NSW’s commitment to deliver for walking, cycling and public transport, (as clearly seen in planning condition B34 for bus lanes on Parramatta Road; for parkland and active transport on Rozelle Parklands; or public transport reviews post-opening and an active transport strategy implementation on Western Harbour Tunnel) <i>TfNSW actively shirks these conditions.</i></p> <p>As a result, the NSW Auditor General’s recommendation into WestConnex is that you require an independent review of major projects reported to <i>Parliament</i> rather than just Departments’ Secretaries. The Community has no one who can force TfNSW to deliver the place-based promises made by Government.</p>	<p>A model approach to auditing government projects is the UK “inspectorate” process, an independent public inspection of major projects, with an ability for objectors to be heard. The inquiry should recommend a genuinely independent business case and planning review process for major road project approval, including a public hearing that calls on objectors.</p> <p>Alternatively (a helpful but less impactful option) implement the NSW Auditor General’s recommendation to report reviews of major projects to Parliament.</p> <p>Then, at least, elected representatives can advocate for public benefits where the auditor has flagged they are at risk.</p>
<p>Transport for NSW policy starts with walking, but its major road projects all deliver faster cars</p> <p>TfNSW is fixated with speeding up traffic. Yet TfNSW’s own (Road User Space Allocation) Policy is to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport over driving.</p> <p>Even where Government Strategies clearly point to an outcome (eg: the Bays West Master Plan and Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy both seek restoration of Glebe Island Bridge for walking and cycling), car-focused projects like the Rozelle Interchange make no effort to do so.</p> <p>Transport for NSW has made most streets unsafe for people walking and riding, especially children. Consistent with the rights of a child, we should be designing child-friendly cities which value independent mobility over speed.</p>	<p>Make Transport for NSW accountable for delivering for all transport customers, particularly children</p> <p>Establish the ‘purpose’ of Transport for NSW in legislation to serve all road users starting with people walking, then riding and catching public transport, then freight, and driving cars last. Amend the objectives of the Road Transport Act to include a modal road user hierarchy, and a desired outcome of a ‘child-friendly city’.</p> <p>Make TfNSW deliver improvements to Victoria Road and Parramatta Road to support walking, cycling and public transport and restore the Glebe Island Bridge to improve walking and cycling between the Inner West and the City.</p> <p>Lower the default urban speed to 30km/h and make it safer and easier for people to walk and ride on local streets.</p>



<p>We can't build our way out of traffic</p> <p>Transport for NSW / RMS has spent 30 years trying to increase capacity to reduce congestion and has patently failed, because building new roads induces more traffic. This is known as the 'Mogridge Position'.</p> <p>Motorways, planned on flawed models that assume 3.5% annual road traffic increases, actually induce people to make longer and more trips. Road spending hasn't "busted congestion", but causes it.</p> <p>By contrast, London grew multi-modal trips by 5 million with no new roads, and has 1 million <i>less</i> car trips. Rozelle Interchange is a wake-up call to a long term systemic problem with road-building.</p>	<p>Align Transport's budget to community needs, with more money for people to walk and ride and catch public transport</p> <p>Stop building motorways and roads based on 'background' growth or where better alternatives exist. The Western Sydney Roads package, aimed at 90% of people driving, needs its own inquiry. Reallocate savings to public and active transport.</p> <p>Increase spend on active transport, starting with TfNSW-funded cycleways the length of Parramatta and Victoria Roads. The UN recommends active mode funding is 20% of the transport budget. NSW spends less than 0.2%. Make this at least 2% in 2024, 5% in 2025 and 10% - 20% from 2026 when Transport's 'Net Zero' roadmap kicks in.</p>
<p>Rozelle and like projects are being driven and approved using flawed assumptions and are not addressing critical issues</p> <p>Transport as an agency requires a wide ranging change in culture and approach. Why are the place, parkland and urban renewal benefits, and public transport and cycling priority promises of WestConnex still ignored? If no-one checks these outcomes, TfNSW will keep making the same hollow promises over and over again.</p> <p>Road-building in NSW is driven by traffic models that overestimate the number of cars, and by business cases that only value travel time saving for vehicles, and assume more cars means more productivity. Neither are true - not only are young people less likely to drive, but COVID has proven what we saw on previous projects - commuting times do not change a city's productivity.</p>	<p>Fix the rules by which projects are driven, starting with a carbon lens on transport</p> <p>Focus on Net Zero: Planning and Transport for NSW must revise their infrastructure planning and assessment approach to be consistent with a Net Zero goal. This requires mode shift, reducing vehicle kilometres travelled and maximising local walking (and riding).</p> <p>TfNSW business cases must exhaust all low carbon (public or active) options first, before a road capacity enhancement project can progress (the 'ASI' approach - avoid, shift, improve).</p> <p>Stop justifying investment using inflated travel time saving values: Stop, or heavily discount, valuing travel time savings for commuters as a benefit (as UK TAG does) especially when the destination are city centres served by public transport.</p>



Models around the world have improved significantly since NSW's strategic models were developed. That NSW has 3 strategic transport models, of which the one that 'justified' Westconnex cannot even model public transport, is absurd.

Many predicted this mess. Yet even when issues are raised by stakeholders, feedback is not used to change projects. State agencies dismiss even detailed studies of surface networks by councils. By contrast, Transport for London uses the 'Gunning Principles' to ensure genuine consultation and goes to the public four times for major projects, equal to each of our Gates 0 to 4.

WestConnex's record-breaking speed for a \$17bn project from "problem definition" to "detailed design" is the reason we are in this mess - the "Commitment Fallacy" - where projects are deliberately rushed and under-costed to 'get them started'¹

Change the way models are used:

Direct Transport for NSW to use one multi-modal strategic model for road-based projects, that takes account of mode impacts on buses, walking and cycling.

Engage don't just inform: Update TfNSW consultation processes to reflect the Gunning Principles and Federal Government [Best Practice Guidelines](#) (like 'not rushed, not burdensome, transparent').

Require multi-stage consultation on the project need, then options and then design.

Finally, we urge the Inquiry to be slow and deliberative in uncovering where this project went wrong and chase down all the many improvements required to avoid similar projects happening in the future.

We would welcome the chance to provide the inquiry with any further assistance that you may require.

Yours Sincerely,

Marc Lane and Tegan Mitchell
President and Board Member, WalkSydney

CC: The Hon. John Graham MLC, Minister for Roads
The Hon. Jo Haylen MP, Minister for Transport
The Hon. Paul Scully MP, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

¹ Flyvbjerg and Gardner "How Big Things Get Done", 23