

**Submission
No 19**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE ROZELLE INTERCHANGE

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Submission to the Upper House Inquiry re. Impacts of the Rozelle Interchange Project

This submission lodged 17th March, 2024
by:

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ATT: The Hon. Cate Faehrmann, MLC; Chair of the Upper House Inquiry into the Impact of the Rozelle Interchange Project.

Dear Madam Chair,

I thank you and your colleagues for this opportunity to contribute to the forthcoming Upper House Inquiry into the Impact of the Rozelle Interchange Project.

I have lived in the vicinity of the project for some 19 years and love the suburbs that surround where this Interchange has now been built. Balmain especially, inspired me to change careers and earn a Master of City Planning from UNSW. I don't believe these neighbouring suburbs are NIMBY strongholds like some in the YIMBY movement like to accuse, instead, I see them as livable and appreciative communities that could serve as the potential blueprint for the rest of Sydney, demonstrating how to do low-rise high density well. I know the pitfalls of suburban sprawl, having grown up in Canberra - but since 2005, I've lived right across this Balmain Peninsula – and within every suburb it has to offer...

During the conception and construction of this Rozelle Interchange Project (which I will simply refer to as **the Project**), I've lived in Balmain East, Lilyfield and now in Balmain. Prior to this, I lived at No. 6 Lilyfield Road (a red-roofed home directly adjacent to Victoria Road) and what *became* the Project. This house is very first house passed by traffic as it comes off the Anzac Bridge.

For the six years leading to 2015, I was a fierce advocate for an extension of the L1 Inner West light rail to Balmain. While I loved living in Balmain, I'd never lived in a suburb with such bad traffic and parking issues. It was frustrating being so close to Sydney CBD, often not more than three kilometers (as the crow flies) – but still potentially 40mins away by bus. With an abandoned rail corridor, same gauge and everything as that being extended to Dulwich Hill for light rail, this seemed a low-cost way to throw Balmain an alternative to car dependency.

In the wake of the cancelled Rozelle Metro, I hatched on an idea for a new potential light rail spur, that could have a terminus stopping unobtrusively beneath the surface suburb of Balmain - in an abandoned, heritage-listed, water reservoir beneath the central 'village green' of Gladstone Park. This could have been fed into by a tunnel off the

available freight tracks still in concrete at White Bay, after being punched into the sandstone cliff adjacent to them. My concept was finally adopted by our former Greens MP, Jamie Parker – as his local transport policy for Balmain. By 2012, we had strong, local support – he’d given speeches to then Transport Minister Gladys Berejiklian in the Parliament, and more local people than not seemed to want the connection. This was because it was an idea that relied on *existing* infrastructure, one which had the support of the NSW branch of the National Trust, so it seemed it would not involve too much effort – and be beneficial to the main shopping strip and community, even the local hospital – so most Balmain residents appeared to accept it...

Then, in the years that followed, momentum slowed for the idea at a State level. I used to look over my fence in Lilyfield Road and watch contractors first clearing the Rozelle Railyards of its once overgrown vegetation - and then finally of its tracks. This had been sanctioned (I would later learn) by Roads and Ports Minister, Duncan Gay. He’d added a specific clause into the Act past in Parliament for the removal of the Newcastle Rail Line (of all things), that also allowed him to order the removal of tracks in Rozelle! This had been done with no fanfare, and the legislative change hadn’t been flagged with the Balmain community at all prior to Gay deciding to execute it. An REF was all that was needed, produced and approved without challenge by RMS itself. After years of local advocacy, I certainly felt betrayed - given the Coalition Cabinet had known full-well of my proposal...

In 2015, roughly six months after my family and I sold 6 Lilyfield Road, it was announced in the SMH that this thing called ‘the Rozelle Interchange’ would instead bring the M4 and M5, right to our former back doorstep... The rest is history.

Based on *all* my personal experience relating to this project, ie. my understanding of the sector, my local knowledge for the surrounding suburbs, the groups that opposed it and my personal obsession with keeping dibs on this project’s construction – to chart what steps incrementally shaped it - my own local perspective is likely to be second-to-none as one of your community witnesses.

Points for discussion from the Inquiry’s Terms of Reference

If permitted to speak at this inquiry, then the matters I can shed light on would be as follows (according to your Terms of Reference)¹:

(j) The adequacy of Transport for NSW planning, resource allocation and public communication in the period leading to and directly after the opening of the Rozelle Interchange.

¹ <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=3029>

In particular:

- The decision for RMS to create the Rozelle Interchange (before any other modes of transport or agencies ie. TfNSW, could reserve corridors) within the Rozelle Railyards. This now means NSW taxpayers could face much higher costs for any future light rail extension built between Lilyfield and Pymont – (through White Bay), to help relieve an already congested L1 Inner West service.

Some in the bureaucracy may now wish to argue that the final layout of the Rozelle Interchange has made the costs for such an initiative ‘prohibitive’. Even though this idea had been listed as a future ‘initiative for investigation over the next 10-20 years’ in 2018’s *Future Transport 2056 Greater Sydney Services and Infrastructure Plan* (p.196)², *INSW’s 2018 State Infrastructure Strategy Update* (p.106)³ and the 2018 *Eastern City District Plan* (p.7).⁴ All three documents cite a Bays Light Rail extension as a worthy thing to investigate – even *with* the previous Government’s commitment to a Metro West project confirmed. Indeed, the additional light rail could have fed passengers from the greater Inner West into the Metro for westbound services and faster journey times into the CBD.

- The loss of the once heavily utilised footbridge over Victoria Road between two regionally significant bus stations without an efficient replacement. The former bridge had also served as the most efficient link for Inner West cyclists wanting to reach the Anzac Bridge and we were without it for years.
- The loss of the *Beattie Bush Bridge* over the CityWest Link, which greatly decreased the sense of safety and efficiency for pedestrian and cyclists travelling between Balmain, Rozelle and the Glebe Foreshore for years.
- The loss of Buruwan Park (next to the Rozelle Bay Light Rail stop) which was levelled and turned into an expanded part of the Crescent, increasing the urban heat island effect locally, and reducing the appeal of walking from Annandale to the Glebe Foreshore for many over years.
- My experience re. the Modification Approval’s Process for the Crescent Overpass (Mod 2) and how (I believe), DPIE officials stifled my suggestions of adding some multimodal provisions – which I had hoped the Planning Minister (Stokes) might add to the project as a condition of approval. In the end, I bypassed the bureaucracy and contacted the Minister’s Office directly. Turns out he liked it - and held up the Modification approval by another month – requesting that his own bureaucrats show him ‘why it couldn’t be done’. It would seem they successfully bluffed him into thinking it couldn’t be done

² <https://www.future.transport.nsw.gov.au/future-transport-plans/greater-sydney-services-and-infrastructure-plan>

³ <https://www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au/sis-2018/>

⁴ <https://greatercities.au/strategic-planning/city-plans/eastern>

due to what I was only told were ‘engineering reasons’. These ‘engineering reasons’ were never relayed to me in detail – even when I requested to know what they were... For the sake of those on the panel, my stepfather was a civil-engineer and I myself have worked with many good engineers. I believe, if the engineers and bureaucrats working on the Rozelle Interchange had been open to incorporating my additions, they would have found a way, it wasn’t hard. I suspect the reluctance by these bureaucrats to examine my contributions in more detail, was likely due to a Cabinet wish to meet a ribbon cutting ceremony before the 2023 election – one which didn’t happen anyway. Whatever the reason, they weren’t prepared to encourage such additions and the end product (I believe) is poorer for promoting regional active transport.

- The conduct of Community Liaisons for the Rozelle Interchange Project and their tactics of delaying messages between the Community and the Project Managers, as well as misleading communicates to people like myself. This was a well-known frustration for many Community advocates trying no longer to *stop* the project (that time had passed), but rather, to improve it for future active use. Supposedly the subsuming of RMS into TfNSW was supposed to make all future projects less road focused. The problem was, we were still dealing with all the same RMS characters as before – and the same old mentality as opposed to the new multi-modal one. I recall one Senior Liaison told me (words to the effect of) “look Nathan, yeah, what you’re saying, as much as it may make sense in terms of engineering and avoiding greater long-term expenses, and even if we *wanted* to accommodate active users better - it doesn’t really matter... This [the Interchange] was approved as a \$5B motorway project, not as some all singing all dancing multimodal project – that’s the bottom line.” This comment indicated very little had changed – I’d been dealing with him for two years prior to the administrative change where RMS had been taken over by TfNSW, but it improved nothing in terms of this project. He referred to the lack of efficient active transport corridors planned across the Project (which we still suffer from), as a ‘legacy issue’.
- The need to ensure *all* the asbestos is cleared away from the former Project’s construction site – which I’ll remind the panel, is far more than just the Rozelle Parklands.
- The clear, but perhaps unnecessary, visual obstacles that now seem to have been placed right in the way of any potential light rail connection that could one day link between Lilyfield LR stop and Pyrmont (over the Glebe Island Bridge).
- The observed impacts of not having a direct, safe, pedestrian and cycle crossing over Victoria Road (where the old footbridge once was or very close to that location).

- The unnecessary widening of Victoria Road, as well as the entrance to Lilyfield Road - which means cars now coming off the Anzac Bridge tend to see more open space and speed-up into our residential Inner West, rather than slow down.
- The fact there are now far less shade trees around Victoria Road's southern end and along the CityWest Link – this deters greater pedestrian activity.

(k) the cost of the Rozelle Interchange and the total cost of WestConnex.

- The total cost of WestConnex was meant to be \$10B⁵ (p11) when first flouted by Nick Greiner (as the inaugural head of INSW). It ballooned to \$16.8B under subsequent Premiers. However, this price was never revised upward from the moment the Rozelle Interchange contract was awarded. Why not? We had a redesign, a year of chronic wet weather, followed by Covid – so this amount doesn't seem to pass the 'pub test' if left unchanged, especially when *every other project* in the '*Tomorrow's Sydney*' agenda seemed to blow out dramatically in cost (except the NW Metro, which many may argue had a very large budget allocated to it to start with)...
- The full stated cost of WestConnex itself doesn't take into account the additional costs of the Western Harbour Tunnel, the Warringah Freeway Upgrade, the Sydney Gateway (ie. airport link) and the F6 Motorway which is currently underway. The F6 alone has a predicted cost of \$18B⁶ by the time its completed. The total cost for *all* these projects should be re-considered as *part of WestConnex* – because they all *feed into WestConnex*. Because of this, these future tollways will once again benefit the owners of WestConnex (Transurban), whether it gains control of them or not. Given the \$195B in projected toll revenue heading Transurban's way over the next 40 years ⁷– I'm sure they'll be in a position to purchase these projects too, once they're completed – that's if the Government wishes to sell them...
- At the time of writing this submission, we can observe a new Metro Station taking shape at The Bays, however, the financial impacts of the Rozelle Interchange Project on the Metro West project should be closely examined. I'd encourage the panel to consider why there no additional station between The Bays and Five Dock. This critical decision has left the Inner West with a 4.5-kilometre gap between stations, right where it is arguably its most car-

⁵ https://www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au/media/vtojbznzb/sis_report_introduction_print.pdf

⁶ <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/more-than-westconnex-f6-extension-to-cost-18-billion-20170704-gx49zp.html>

⁷ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/toll-review-identifies-a-road-to-a-fairer-system-for-motorists>

dependent. This will serve as a severe disadvantage for residents in low-lying suburbs around Iron Cove too, especially if they're wanting to head west! The absence of an additional Lilyfield/Leichhardt mid-point station (which could have interchanged with the Inner West L1 light rail) was cited as not being desirable because *'the locality would present complex constructability and deliverability challenges due to interaction with the M4-M5 Link, Rozelle Interchange and Hawthorne Canal. Initial investigations suggest this would require a very deep station, resulting in greatly increased access and interchange times for customers.'* Source: Sydney Metro West Submissions Report – Chapter 6 (p182).⁸

Thus, the absence of a Lilyfield/Leichhardt Metro station could be potentially attributed to WestConnex – especially if the most appropriate tunnel alignment (the one which could have facilitated a convenient light rail interchange) was compromised, at least in terms of cost by the development of the Rozelle Interchange first.

- I can also shed light on the seemingly cheap approach taken towards abating noise and air pollution, as part of the Project's design.
- I would encourage a recommendation by the Inquiry that a robust set of legislative changes be made, aimed at speeding up the Major Projects Modification Approvals process in terms of bureaucracy. This would mean incoming governments can more easily alter bad projects they've inherited. This seems really important – as it's not so much the costs of any engineering changes that blow out the project's budget as an accumulation of costs that we associate with delaying a project for months because of bureaucratic processes, that truly make any change seem cost-prohibitive. If a new Government is to follow-through on any election policy of 'project change', it needs to be supported within its own Mechanics of Government to do so.

Perhaps the key would be to re-allocate a set budget (rather than cancelling it outright) to encourage the incumbent contractor to stay on board and help adapt the project (with some additional financing), rather than simply suing the new Government for expenses incurred to date.

These enormous 'mega projects' are *not* always popular - and such a change within the bureaucracy could really help ensure that concerned voters are given the best bang for their buck. Notable situations where multibillion-dollar contracts have been rushed through by outgoing Governments,

⁸ Sydney Metro West Submissions Report – August 2020:
<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=EXH-28088109%2120220815T060726.033%20GMT>

thereby locking in the next (ie. various Metro projects, WestConnex and the Western Harbour Tunnel) should be learnt from here.

- Likewise (as radical a notion as it may seem), I would encourage another recommendation that the current Government legislate itself the right to re-nationalise Sydney's motorway network, without any upfront penalty. If it truly feels it's in the long-term interests of taxpayers (especially during a cost-of-living crisis) – to do this, and if it's strapped for cash otherwise - it could use some of that \$195B in projected toll revenue over the next forty years, to pay back a low-interest loan that allows it to do this. I see a Premier complaining about the loss of \$1.6B this year in GST revenue – a Treasurer suggesting it prevents his modest budget of \$400M – so clearly, the greatest disgrace of the overall cost of WestConnex is how all that toll money is being collected by *Transurban* and not by NSW Treasury itself. The State had to take on the cost of any risks involved in building the Rozelle Interchange – so why aren't we benefitting more from it, let alone the rest of WestConnex?
- Finally, I would recommend that *all* business cases be placed on the public record when it comes to transport mega projects. At very least, they should be released to the public after State Cabinet has signed-off on them as a policy – and definitely by the time they're put out to tender. The people of NSW (as well as all incoming Governments), have a right to know what they are paying for and why.

(l) any other related matters, ie:

- The inexplicable bias shown by the previous Government in choosing to go with a *motorway junction* in this part of town – that doesn't really favour any other form of transport, including active modes – and which many predicted would not reduce congestion but rather, induce it.
- My view, that potentially, this project could have been actively designed to discourage an expansion or uptake of other modes across much of Sydney. This includes the existing L1 light rail service being extended towards White Bay (as stated in *Future Transport 2056*⁹), a comprehensive expansion of regional cycling and perhaps even a more so, a comprehensive outcome for the Metro West. All of these ideas could have served as solid, modal-shifting alternatives to motoring - now lost given the succeeding Labor Government to the Coalition now claims it does not have the money to do much of this at all.

Finally, I would like to propose some:

(i) Solutions to ease the congestion and gridlock that the opening of the Rozelle Interchange has created, including the impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel after opening (see below):

Some potential solutions (based on my local knowledge and understanding).

Victoria Road (in both Rozelle and Drummoyne) is worse in the morning peak now, than it has ever been. This is a direct result of the Rozelle Interchange opening at the end of last year. We don't *need* traffic modelling to confirm this, it is self-evident for locals in Balmain, Rozelle and Lilyfield trying to enter the flow of traffic on Victoria Road during the morning peak. A lot of the *new* delays have been the result of prioritising traffic lights so they favour the non-local through traffic on Victoria Road. On top of this, is the new layout of painted lanes on Victoria Road itself (ie. the exclusive bus lane, a lane away from the kerb, discouraging drivers from using the actual kerbside lane). Most of all, however, I feel this is all because Victoria Road, the surface road (in Rozelle) continues to be used by through-traffic that comes off the Iron Cove Bridge with only one intention; to reach the Anzac Bridge. In my view, this needs to be stopped.

Stopping through-traffic on Victoria Road (in Rozelle) from the north shore to Anzac Bridge is justifiable because there is now a toll-free tunnel that allows the same journey to take place *beneath* Rozelle. The previous State Government spent \$1.1billion building the *Iron Cove Link* tunnel for just that purpose. Therefore, the underground journey option should be made compulsory for all through-traffic headed to the Anzac Bridge. I really don't care if the advice is that the Iron Cove Link tunnel is prone to bank-ups near its exit point onto the Anzac Bridge. The purpose of that free tunnel, was to carry people from Iron Cove to Anzac Bridge, allowing them to benefit from a bypass of traffic lights above ground, along Victoria Road. Why that same tunnel was not extended a little further - to the Gladesville Bridge – so it could alleviate Drummoyne's congestion too, we'll never know...

During a mid-January 2024 Town Hall meeting in Balmain, I proposed to Howard Collins that those passing through Rozelle to Anzac Bridge, should be penalised if they don't use the tunnel instead of the Victoria Road surface road. This received a wild applause from the local crowd gathered and subsequent media coverage. I explained that TfNSW could erect smart gantries using number-plate detection technology (like we see with point-to-point speed camera on highways) to record those passing through them on Victoria Road. If the same number plate was recorded within 15 minutes trying to exit Victoria Road onto the Anzac Bridge as had just entered from Iron Cove Bridge, they would have to pay a \$5 fine – but not if they did the same journey through the free-tunnel. Even our local mayor, Darcy Byrne, considered this to be 'not a bad idea'...

In subsequent press coverage, both Howard Collins and NSW Roads Minister John Graham dismissed my idea saying 'we aren't really in the business of introducing new tolls'. Given the recent Alan Fells review into the Sydney Toll network, I think they could reconsider their position – but why call it a toll? The penalty could be referred to as a 'congestion tax' or 'a fine for contributing to unnecessary congestion'. It certainly wouldn't go to *Transurban* or even be E-Tag dependent - it could be mailed straight to the home address of the registered driver, and increase if not paid on time. All payments could be made online (a frustration in itself) and go straight to the SDRO for redistribution to the Inner West Council and Canada Bay Council, to assist them with improved placemaking initiatives and active transport infrastructure throughout the Rozelle and Drummoyne areas.

As a side note, during the 1970s the Department of Main Roads (now TfNSW) widened the Gladesville Bridge southbound from three lanes to four - without any notable structural modifications. The additional road space was simply taken from one of the bridge's generous 2-meter-wide shared paths on either side (ie. the western one). This allowed for an increased flow of traffic into Drummoyne – but then where could it go?

I believe part of the answer to Victoria Road's problems is to ensure there is once again ample active transport separation right along the corridor. If TfNSW (the modern-day DMR) wishes for people to adopt active transport and feel safe, they have to bite the bullet and provide safe separated infrastructure – no more shared paths close to busy 'stroads'.

At present, we have only shared paths along the edges of Victoria Road in Rozelle – which is crazy, given the amount of street furniture also being hosted on these shared paths. This is why the construction of the Rozelle Interchange has also been highly discouraging for those previously prone to using active transport as their means of getting around - because it forced them onto the Victoria Road shared paths with the loss of the old active bridges. These had offered us near seamless passage over the CityWest Link, and to the Anzac Bridge.

At present, the Project *still* continues to discourage active commuters, as the new active connections across the Rozelle Parklands were the first things cut during the recent asbestos closure. Since then there's been no clear commitment to re-open the more efficient links of this network quickly – and this just forces people back into their cars.

Across time, Rozelle has essentially been cut in half by traffic. The history of the Rozelle stretch of Victoria Road has been one of constant widening. Houses have been lost, more lanes added - this will only continue if we don't try something new. Victoria Road can't be allowed to continue functioning as the regional through-way between the North Shore and the Anzac Bridge (at least not in Rozelle) any longer.

Given the alternative tunnel below, performing the same function as Victoria Road to the Anzac Bridge, it would be far better if Victoria Road in Rozelle were allowed to function more as a 'calmed local arterial'. This is something expert planners at Inner West Council drew a plan up for called the draft Rozelle Public Domain Improvement Plan - but Council's Local Labor voting bloc (which holds the balance of power) refused to release it for public exhibition and comment. This was a definite mistake.

Following consultation, the plan could allow the surface of Victoria Road in Rozelle (and Darling Street/Balmain Road) to become more liveable. Building on this, the proximity of Victoria Road in Rozelle to the future Bays Metro (and buses), could be a very good thing. We could plant shade trees, build cycle ways, new shop-top or mixed-use development, and create a truly vibrant place for people. This would all be car-reduced with slower speeds and transit-oriented housing, rather than the current noisy road lined with light industrial warehouses and showrooms we have now. All we need, is for the State Government to encourage through-motorists to use the Iron Cove Link tunnel rather than the surface road.

For those heading south from Iron Cove Bridge into the broader Inner West (or west along the CityWest Link the same smart gantries proposed earlier would not penalise them. Nor locals from suburbs either side of Victoria Road trying to cross, or even those from suburbs either side heading to the Anzac Bridge. The proposed 'congestion tax' would *only* impact those who pass through *both* gantries and within the space of fifteen minutes - not those who only pass through one. If through-motorists were to stop in Rozelle or Balmain (having entered from Iron Cove) and stay for fifteen minutes or more (to get coffee, do a school drop off or tend to some commerce) before re-entering traffic on Victoria Road to continue to Anzac Bridge - they too would not face penalty.

The bottom line is the proposed smart gantries would work as a deterrent for many who'd otherwise use the surface road to travel into the CBD. With a free alternative now below ground, the gantries would (over the longer term) prove a lot cheaper than having a small army of traffic boffins continuing to tweak the flow of traffic lights in Rozelle remotely, in real time, from the Eveleigh Traffic Control Centre (yes this really is currently happening!)

As a past Transport Planner, I was not a highly-skilled traffic modeler, but I did dabble in this 'dark art' – long enough to learn a thing or two... The first thing TfNSW needs to realise is RMS' folly in ignoring its own rating system for traffic congestion when the Project was first proposed. This rating system ranges from a classification of 'A' through to 'F', with 'F' being the most congested rating a traffic modeler can give to any corridor. When the Rozelle Interchange was proposed, Anzac Bridge was already at 'F' during the morning and afternoon peaks – according to RMS. There is nothing worse than 'F', so even if delays get worse, the rating will remain the same. When the City of Sydney made this point (in its submission to the Department of Planning), regarding the

Interchange proposal - which clearly aimed to flood WestConnex traffic from the south and west onto the Anzac Bridge, no one listened and no one addressed it. Only the many Community groups concerned listened – backing the City’s take on things with hundreds of additional submissions to DPIE. It made no difference. The project was approved by Cabinet and we have the result we now have... As one expert City advisor predicted, “RMS doesn’t think it can get worse than ‘F’ – but it can, it can end up totally ‘F’ed!” ...Which is where we are now.

We can’t widen Anzac Bridge or Gladesville Bridge any further - what we have now is what we’re stuck with. So why any professional worth his salt would try to bring up more traffic from underground (between these two bridges) and expect less congestion on either, is inexplicable and downright incompetent - especially given the cost to taxpayers and now toll-payers, over the next forty years.

The only way to reduce traffic on Victoria Road (through Drummoyne as well as Rozelle), is to reclaim some of the existing road space and give it back to active transport use. A single lane could facilitate a two-way unbroken separated cycle corridor. Something all will see as much safer to use - no matter how busy the remaining traffic lanes get.

The same could be said for Gladesville Bridge. Victoria Road in Drummoyne is mostly a traffic disaster because five lanes from the north shore merge onto the Gladesville Bridge into four. Once they get to Drummoyne, this merges down to three at the Lyons Road intersection for all who are City-bound. One of these three is then lost to a dedicated bus lane! Add to that, the fact that many now want to reach WestConnex (via the entry portal to the Iron Cove Link). This only induces more demand from the North Shore along the same corridor. Thus, if we returned the stolen 2m-wide footpath on the west side of the Gladesville Bridge and made it a designated cycle path, Transport will have provided an alternative to motoring and buses (which also get caught in jams) for those living on the North Shore wanting to reach the City without a train.

The steep inclines of Victoria Road through Rozelle and Drummoyne are not an obstacle for future cyclists. They will be overcome by the growing use of e-bikes in Australia. As a past active transport planner, I know we’re at a tipping point in terms of those prepared to invest in these. In a cost-of-living crisis, with ever rising fuel costs, an e-bike is the Tesla more people can afford - so it’s best for Governments to encourage a transition onto them by providing a safer space on the road for those willing to make it. Every road planner should remember this - **every bike is one less car.**

The like Victoria Road, the CityWest Link has also become worse for City-bound locals, especially those living in Annandale, Lilyfield, Leichhardt and beyond. This is due mainly to the fact we now have ten lanes merging down quickly into four. Repeatedly, at the Balmain Town Hall meeting I attended, we were told by experts (State and Local) that

‘Sydneysiders don’t know how to merge’. Well, this is not something that can’t be taught to them, they *can* do it - both responsibly and co-operatively.

Merging should be part of driver learning – and only then, if they *still* fail to do it properly, *then* TfNSW should feel compelled to adopt traffic lights in order to stop the flow of lanes altogether, and allow alternate flows to be encouraged... Merging is not rocket science, it’s simple, you merge ‘*like the teeth on a zipper*’ - one after the other. Those who live in Balmain and Rozelle already know this, we do it all the time coming off the Anzac Bridge into Roberts Street - where two lanes quickly become one (at Mullins Street). The speed limit coming into Balmain also reduces to 40km/h. A drop in speed could be something that also assists everyone exiting from the motorway portals, the CityWest Link and Victoria Road, coming onto the Anzac Bridge. It’s not that hard, you just ‘*merge like the teeth on a zipper*’, one after the other...

I would encourage a ‘driver awareness’ campaign to be funded in NSW around this issue of merging. It’s not really working to build more lanes and then cram them together at the last minute into roads which have less. I would also not attempt to improve road capacity on the Western Distributor (between Anzac Bridge and the Harbour Bridge) by widening anything – let congestion be its own deterrent there. The Metros and the Western Harbour Tunnel are coming – until then, congestion can be lived with if it saves us hundreds of millions more... Just like in the Interchange’s tunnels, congestion is all part of metropolitan motoring. We need motoring alternatives if we’re to ever *reduce* this congestion. Just because the last Government chose to sell off State assets and use the capital to invest in a \$20B+ road network to complete some 1950’s vision of Sydney – it didn’t mean it was guaranteed to work.

Conclusion

In summary, if the last Coalition Government had listened more to experts like Dr Michelle Zeibots at UTS (whose life’s work revolves around the proven phenomenon of *induced demand*) – and less to road *idealists* like Mike Baird, Duncan Gay, Tony Abbott, *Transurban* and importantly, Nick Greiner - this debacle may have been avoided.

NSW could have made the same levels of investment (creating potentially even more work for the construction industry) by choosing alternatives to motoring projects like more truly transformative public and active transport initiatives. Even *Urban Taskforce*, that great advocate of over-development, pitched the case for public transport in its 2012 glossy vision ‘*100,000 new apartments and 100,000 new jobs*’ for Parramatta Road¹⁰. Sadly, only a few months later – the vision for renewing Parramatta Road was an Infrastructure NSW policy – but so was an underground motorway. Nick Greiner

¹⁰ <https://www.urbantaskforce.com.au/100000-new-apartments-100000-new-jobs-can-transform-parramatta-road-liveability-corridor/>

promoted WestConnex as ‘NSW’s Priority Number One’ – but the public transport aspect never came...

We could have had dedicated light rail feeders built along well-known and perennially congested arterial ‘stroads’ (ie. vibrant retail high streets that once hosted people, lost today as corridors which mostly service cars) like Victoria Road and Parramatta Road. We could have had more Metro West stations on the existing line (where large gaps in coverage now exist due to cost blowouts in the Transport Cluster) and indeed, we could have paid for long-overdue signaling upgrades and the expansion of the Sydney Trains network (including our freight rail services).

A once-in-a-generation opportunity – resulting in so much waste. The only *real* winner, was *Transurban* and its shareholders/investors. They don’t care what’s happening with all this traffic now - so long as it’s going through their motorway network. In that regard, I would encourage closer examination – perhaps even by ICAC, as to how *they* wound up with a near monopoly. This is because the entire Rozelle Interchange project could now be seen as something designed to entice as many motorists from all over Sydney, into *Transurban*’s coveted ‘funnel for fortune’ during its early years of inception. The Roads Minister at the time, Duncan Gay (famous for his hatred of cyclists in the City of Sydney) was quoted as saying words to the effect of ‘WestConnex was just going to follow under Parramatta Road, but this is better’ ...Is it really?

We’re now locked into more motoring for *forty years* – and even if people boycott this Project or switch to a different mode – the projected profits for *Transurban* (so I’ve heard) are guaranteed by the Government as part of its sale of WestConnex! I’ve been told this was signed-off by the previous State Government, and they sold the eTag company too! So again, when I think of how the projected toll collection for *Transurban* (over the next 40 years) is in the order of \$195B, it’s not unreasonable to suggest this may warrant some further investigation by ICAC. I think this would be a good public investment, when the project’s initial champion, Nick Greiner, left his inaugural ‘Infrastructure Tsar’ role with InfrastructureNSW and later became a paid advisor to *Transurban* – before going on to become the Federal President of the Liberal Party, the same political team (in Government) who never stopped championing this project.¹¹ I’m not able to say if he had ulterior motives at play – but I do think the optics raise questions - and I would encourage this Inquiry to examine them with sincerity.

In conclusion, I remember it was put so simply by transport academic Chris Standen¹² (of the University of Sydney), in his 2018 feature article published for *The Conversation* -

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nick_Greiner

¹² <https://theconversation.com/privatising-westconnex-is-the-biggest-waste-of-public-funds-for-corporate-gain-in-australian-history-102790>

that **“Privatising WestConnex was the biggest waste of public funds for corporate gain in Australian history.”**

Given the result we now have coming out of the Rozelle Interchange and the enormous costs attached in getting us here – those who advocated so fiercely for it - who now remain so *silent* – these people should not be forgotten by those on the panel of this Inquiry - but rather, held to account.

I thank you once again for this opportunity to comment. I will be more than happy to appear at hearings if the panel would like me to.

Mr Nathan English, MPlan

Balmain.