

**REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 6 - TRANSPORT AND THE  
ARTS**

**IMPACT OF THE ROZELLE INTERCHANGE**

**At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Wednesday 10 April 2024**

**The Committee met at 10:00.**

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**PRESENT**

Ms Cate Faehrmann (Chair)

The Hon. Anthony D'Adam

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine

The Hon. Bob Nanva

The Hon. Chris Rath

The Hon. Natalie Ward

**PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

The Hon. Wes Fang



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**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the first hearing of the Committee's inquiry into the impact of Rozelle interchange. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. My name is Cate Faehrmann and I am Chair of the Committee.

I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence they give today. However, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside of the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide procedural fairness for inquiry participants. I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of these procedures. I welcome our first witnesses, Ms Kobi Shetty and Ms Stephanie Di Pasqua. I remind you both that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as members of Parliament.

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**Ms KOBI SHETTY**, Member for Balmain, before the Committee

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA**, Member for Drummoyne, before the Committee

**The CHAIR:** Thank you for making the time to give evidence. I assume both of you have a short opening statement to make.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Thank you for the opportunity to address the inquiry today, Chair. I want to say from the outset that I'm here to represent my community. My intention is to work constructively with this Committee, the Government, the Minister and Transport to get the best outcome for my constituents. Since the opening of the Rozelle interchange, it has been traffic chaos in Drummoyne. My community has been subjected to significant congestion. We have rat-running in local streets. It's simply unacceptable. There are local schools in the vicinity, numerous childcare centres and people walking to and from school. There are children out and about. We need real changes. We need real solutions.

My intention here today, along with my submission, is to offer practical solutions to this problem and to work constructively with the Committee and the Government to make sure that we address these issues that are currently being experienced in Drummoyne. I have written to the Minister over 20 times on this issue about the Rozelle interchange. I want to make sure and stress today through this process that the Committee is able to make recommendations that address the traffic problems in Drummoyne.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** I, too, would like to thank the Committee for having us here today to present our thoughts and feedback on this issue. It's obviously been incredibly impactful in the local community in Balmain, Rozelle and all of the other suburbs surrounding the Rozelle interchange. Post-construction, this has been a real punch in the guts for our community; we'd already put up with several years of disruption. We were all very hopeful that, once this interchange opened, we would be able to move on with our lives and we could potentially get some benefits out of the opening of this interchange, despite the fact that there was a great deal of community sentiment that this was not the right way to do traffic planning and this project would never result in positive outcomes, particularly for those surrounding the interchange.

We've been dealing with traffic chaos similar to what the member for Drummoyne has been talking about, with rat-running and lots of local congestion. I know that you've been on the bus journey this morning and it has been unusually quiet today but I do want to note that there have been some improvements made. I've been meeting regularly with Transport for NSW bureaucrats for several months since the interchange opened in November to try and get some resolution to these issues. They have managed to make some improvements, although the impact of these improvements, which have been somewhat positive around Balmain, have then had a flow-on effect to other areas like Drummoyne and Annandale. In Annandale we've seen the City West Link be extended slightly and that has, in turn, pushed congestion issues back into Annandale and Johnston Street, which is an area that you wouldn't have been able to see this morning.

I do want to note that the Transport for NSW bureaucrats have worked hard to try and maximise the flow through this interchange but what we haven't seen being addressed is more fundamental problems with the original design. I don't think it would take any traffic expert to know—or for anyone who had travelled through Rozelle on to the Anzac Bridge prior to this opening—that funnelling four lanes of traffic from Victoria Road into one one-lane bottleneck was ever going to be a situation that was going to cause anything other than complete chaos for the people that are travelling that way into the city. It's been hugely problematic.

Obviously you've all read my submission but I want to acknowledge as well that it's not just the private vehicles that have been impacted by this congestion; the impacts have flowed on to the buses coming out of Balmain, which is our primary mode of transport because we don't have a train line. Buses coming from Leichhardt, Lilyfield, Rozelle and Balmain have been impacted and caught up in this congestion, meaning that alternative options have been really challenging for the community to take up. We've seen buses that've been caught in congestion for anywhere from 20 to 40 additional minutes—still—in recent months.

There's been a very big pedestrian amenity impact where we've lost overpasses for pedestrians. We've lost pedestrian safety amenity and, as a result, we see currently—when I went to visit the Traffic Management Centre myself a couple of weeks ago—people taking really risky behaviour and running across the intersection of Robert Street, where the diversion is 700 metres for them to cross safely at an intersection or an underpass that would be appropriate.

While we're talking a lot about traffic congestion, I want to note that the impact is been much more broad for my community. Obviously, too, we'll be talking about asbestos. That was another dire situation because the one positive that we were looking at getting out of this interchange was some more public, open green space, which was very welcome. For that to have been interrupted within weeks of the opening of the parklands—to the

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extent that we've only just regained some of our sporting fields and some of our pedestrian access to the park lands, and much of the parkland remain remains closed—has been incredibly disappointing. "Nothing is off the table," is what the Minister for Roads told us for many months after the interchange had opened but it has been incredibly frustrating for the community to see that, beyond the shuffling around and things that the Transport Management Centre have been able to do to maximise the flow, there hasn't been a great deal of uptake, in my mind and in the mind of my community, of looking at other structural things that could be changed and things like the prioritisation of the toll traffic over the local roads. I'm happy to be here and provide evidence to you today. Thanks very much having me.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Ms Shetty, your submission makes mention—and you did it in your opening statement as well—of the good work of Transport for NSW officials and crews but that they appear to be constrained by Government policy. Can you expand on this? What do you mean by that?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** What I've seen while I've been speaking to them is that they've been keen to modify things like traffic signalling and they did some minor lane changes early on in the piece. But in terms of some things that I raised specifically around the time that the interchange opened at the end of last year with the traffic metering, the lights that are preventing people from being able to flow freely from the local streets onto the Anzac Bridge—they're phasing the traffic to slow it down further. That is giving real priority to the traffic coming from the M4 tolled tunnels.

When I raised the possibility of them investigating slowing down the tolled traffic or doing something to restore the balance so that the local traffic wasn't being pushed back in order to allow the prioritisation, I was told initially that it could be looked into but then when I raised it again after the school holidays in January, it was taken off the table completely. Looking at things like metering further upstream as cars were entering the M4 tunnels was something that we talked about being a possibility. I was told after January that that's not something they were looking at doing and that it was around safety issues, about which the information has never been presented.

**The CHAIR:** Just to be clear, you've requested that that safety advice be presented to you or produced—

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** Yes, that's right.

**The CHAIR:** —and that hasn't been?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** Not so far.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Di Pasqua, you've got, potentially, in terms of traffic signals—

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Can I just add to that as well? I've also raised the issue in the meeting that I had in February with Transport for NSW executives as well as the representative of the Minister's office, and I was also told it's not possible to spread traffic flow. The reality is that in Drummoyne we're also suffering from traffic light signalling. I've explicitly stated, in my key recommendations in my submission, that we need to look at traffic light signalling at key intersections that cross over with Victoria Road in Drummoyne. The only way, really, that can be done is if we spread flow. Because right now what it seems Transport for NSW are doing is holding traffic back in local streets to make Victoria Road look like it's flowing, but all the impacts are being felt in those local streets.

**The CHAIR:** Today when we travelled down Victoria Road and we were looking at Victoria Road, it was like a ghost road—if you could explain a road like that. You could have had a street festival on there and not bothered blocking off traffic, it was so quiet. But you're saying that the congestion is very much in the side roads?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Yes, absolutely. That's certainly what my community has said as well. It is about getting onto Victoria Road. We've also been told by Transport for NSW that there is no change to the way in which people—or the commuting time. But that's simply not the case. That's not what we are hearing from our constituents. Our constituents are telling us—and I'm very happy to take the Committee down to Drummoyne perhaps after the school holidays, because I do note that the school holidays are coming up in a couple of days so that may have impacted why we've seen less traffic, perhaps, this morning. But I'm very happy to take the Committee down to meet with my community to show you what it is like in the morning. It is chaos. We have people using rat runs, local streets, to try to get through and funnel onto Victoria Road because they simply can't get on there.

They've created a situation where traffic light sequencing means that people from the eastern side of Drummoyne can't cross Victoria Road. Not everybody is going eastbound to the city. They just can't get on. I think it's about two or three cars that can get through the lights now, when perhaps before it was six or seven. We can see that that's going to have an impact, particularly on the eastern side of a peninsula where there are only limited intersections where you can cross through Victoria Road and over to Drummoyne. It's a significant problem on

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the eastern and the western side of Drummoyne. I'm very happy to take you down to show you what it's like and the practical ways in which this is affecting the community.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you both for your submissions, your time and your advocacy for your communities. I note that both of your submissions are very constructive. You've put recommendations in there about solutions for this, so we're very appreciative of that. As local members, you know best. I want to go to the traffic light sequencing, particularly—maybe, Ms Di Pasqua, just on yours to start with. You've spoken about that. I understand from your submission that you're talking about this area, people living in these streets—it's a peninsula so there's nowhere else for them to go. Can you expand on that briefly? Then I'll ask more generally about the submission.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Yes, I can refer you to my submission where I've made the recommendation to review traffic light sequencing at key intersections along Victoria Road. I'll name them. That's Lyons Road, Edward Street, Day Street and Park Avenue, particularly Park Avenue. That's one where in the morning it's been reported to be—and I've seen it myself. I've actually gone down there. If you stand there, it's one of the last intersections before the Iron Cove Bridge. If you stand there and you look towards Drummoyne, there is a sea of backlog, traffic congestion. Then if you look on the other side of the road, which is the Iron Cove Bridge, it is essentially clear. So when we talk about moving the problem away, that's what's happened. It's essentially pushed the problem to Drummoyne and created these significant congestion and backlog issues. That's why we need to look at those key intersections. I think Transport needs to assess how people are getting out of their community, which they cannot do—and out of their suburb—at the moment. Particularly in the morning peak, it is very difficult to cross Victoria Road. That's why we need to look at those key intersections to improve flow.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** If I am to understand that correctly, your point is it's not just about getting into the city; it's about moving around both your electorates and actually getting across your local area as well as into the city. Is that correct?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** That's right.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** You mentioned engagement. You both sought to engage with Transport for NSW. You mentioned some meetings that you've had. Ms Di Pasqua, could you expand on that and the opportunities for your community to have their say directly with Transport for NSW—that they can hear from the community?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** I'm very happy to answer this question. I first wrote to the Minister on 1 December, asking for a community meeting. In that letter I actually relayed an invitation and said that my office would be very, very happy to facilitate a meeting. I didn't get a written response back until March, and that was after a meeting had been organised with what seems like the Minister's office and senior Transport executives and a Labor councillor. I wasn't invited to the meeting. I wasn't told about the meeting. I was told about the meeting because of my community. It was held on a Monday evening at a pub, upstairs where there are no lifts. I'm not saying that we shouldn't have had that meeting. We absolutely should have. I think it should've come way sooner. I certainly put the invitation out there and wanted to work with the community and the Minister's office.

I raised it again at our meeting in February with Transport and a representative of the Minister's office. We were told, "No, there's no opportunity for a community meeting", and then in March we had one. I think, from the outset, we need to improve communication with our community. When requests for community meetings are made, they should be considered, not from a political perspective but because it's an important way for our community to communicate with Transport for NSW. And the communication there has definitely been lacking. It feels like it's falling on deaf ears. Every time we raise it, we raise traffic light signalling, we raise issues with flow in Victoria Road and things like looking at reviewing the second bus lane at Rozelle—we've raised those issues and it just feels like it falls on deaf ears every single time.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Is there an explanation why—I'm not being political. I see you both want to be constructive. Was there an explanation why a Labor councillor can get a meeting and you weren't informed when you'd asked about it? Is there a way forward to have a community meeting where both of your communities can be heard directly, given the efforts you've gone to? Or are you just getting no response?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Look, I hope so, but out of a community meeting needs to come real action. We had a community meeting on 18 March. Where is the action? We told Transport executives that we need to look at traffic light sequencing. Is that happening? I'm not sure. But that's what needs to happen. It's not about—look, I'm very happy that there was an opportunity for the community to address Transport for NSW executives and I welcome that opportunity absolutely. But what I'm saying is it should have happened months and months and months ago. It should have happened when this all started.

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In future, if we're going to take lessons out of this, we need to know that as community representatives, when we ask for a community meeting, not only is it considered but it's actioned and it's actioned in a way that allows everybody to participate. I mean, if we had the council on board, we could've live streamed it, we could've had an opportunity for those that perhaps cannot make it upstairs to a pub to attend. It could've been in a central area like the council chambers. My office was very, very happy to organise a community meeting. All of that aside, what we're here about today is to make sure we get some real solutions for Drummoyne, because it is a traffic and a safety issue and something needs to be done.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I can see you both trying to be constructive in your recommendations.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I wanted to ask Ms Di Pasqua about the proposal around the traffic light sequencing. I'm familiar with Lyons Road, Day Street and Park Avenue. They're all narrow streets. To what extent, do you think, is this just a product of development on the eastern side of Drummoyne where the population is actually growing and the capacity of those narrow roads to accommodate the traffic volumes is quite constrained? Do you think that's a factor?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Thank you, Mr D'Adam. That is a factor. That's absolutely why we need to address this and address it soon. We know that there may be future development in that area. We know that's the Government policy to uplift and encourage population growth. That's absolutely why we need to be looking at this. We can't be funnelling traffic into local streets like what is occurring. What has actually happened since we've opened the Rozelle interchange is that we've actually created these scenarios where people are using Drummoyne streets to rat-run when they should be on Victoria Road. We even see situations where navigation apps are telling people to make a left and go through a backstreet in order to avoid the traffic gridlock on Victoria Road. I note that my colleague the member for Balmain is nodding her head. I know that she's getting the same feedback from her community. It is a very complex issue, but it needs to be solved.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** If you adjusted the signalling sequencing, isn't that just shifting the problem back onto Victoria Road? Ultimately that's going to create further delays as more traffic goes through. The longer the delays, you're going to end up with more of a congestion problem on Victoria Road.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Part of the problem is that people cannot get out of the peninsula. Not everybody is going eastbound onto Victoria Road. They're actually heading across Victoria Road to get into the western part of Drummoyne and vice versa. That makes it really difficult because there is a lot of backlog. People just cannot get out of their suburb.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** If I can add to that just briefly, part of the reason that we're seeing the shifting around of congestion is because of the bottleneck that has been created by the Rozelle interchange where Victoria Road is joining the Anzac Bridge. That's causing congestion issues. That is meaning that Transport for NSW have to try to spread the pain around, because the prioritisation of the toll traffic means that we now only have one lane feeding from Victoria Road onto the Anzac Bridge. That is causing problems downstream.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** That's absolutely the problem. That one lane after the Iron Cove Bridge is actually contributing to this whole problem. It's why you're seeing the lights at Park Avenue hold everybody in Drummoyne rather than spreading it across, because there is only one lane. I've included that in my submission because it is a problem. We know it's a problem in Balmain and it's a problem in Drummoyne as well.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Shetty, in your submission you talk about trying to encourage public transport, mode shift. To what extent do you think that will alleviate traffic volumes on Victoria Road?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** I think people have been keen to try to find alternatives to get to work when they know that getting in their car is going to see them potentially taking an hour to get to the city. Unfortunately, for the people who travel from the Balmain peninsula there's the 441 and 442 bus. That travels down Robert Street, where your bus came this morning, into the interchange through that single-lane merge, where the bus lane merges with the private vehicle traffic, and then onto the Anzac Bridge. Further to that, once that single-lane merge joins up to the Anzac Bridge, it merges again with all of the single-lane of traffic that has been funnelled from Annandale and the City West Link. We're seeing essentially all of the local traffic being squeezed into a very small space, impacting those 441 and 442 buses and impacting the 437 bus that comes onto the City West Link and heads into the city.

People are keen to mode shift. They're also keen to be able to ride their bikes safely. But what we've seen is actually a decrease in safety around the design of the interchange. There have been some improvements with the opening of the Rozelle Parklands—which haven't been available until the last couple of weeks, when part of those have reopened—for active transport links from the Lilyfield side, where people can actually travel more safely through the parklands and underneath Victoria Road onto the Anzac Bridge. But unfortunately for people travelling onto the Anzac Bridge from the peninsula, there's a very narrow, very unsafe footpath that's a shared

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path that's been created with a post in the middle of it. You would think that when we're creating these new road projects there would be a good opportunity to make sure, at the very least, that the active transport cycleways and pedestrian infrastructure is improved and not detracted from. What we've seen is quite the opposite. Unfortunately, it's been made worse, I would say, rather than better.

**The CHAIR:** Can I jump in with a question? We've been talking about public transport and I want to ask about the ferries as well. Both of your submissions mention the ferries—the need for an additional stop, the fact that the ferries are full and so they're not stopping at all. Could you both comment on that?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** Sure. There's been a commitment from the Government to introduce another stop on the Blackwattle Bay route ferry that goes from Glebe across to Barangaroo. We would really welcome that stop in Annandale. What we've got at the moment is there are no direct bus routes from Annandale into the city. They go a very circuitous way or they go via Parramatta Road so they're slow, which means people choose to commute in their cars because it's just so much quicker. It was 15 minutes prior to the interchange opening and it can take sometimes around an hour to get there on public transport. We would really like to see that Annandale ferry stop opened as soon as possible.

Similarly, there's been a commitment for the Balmain West ferry service to reopen. There was formerly a stop there. There is still a wharf. We'd really like to see the Government expedite that so that people have got real alternatives to get off the Balmain peninsula—which is challenging in a similar way to Drummoyne because people don't have another way out—and from Annandale, where there's a dearth of public transport options to get into the city directly.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Ms Di Pasqua, can I ask you about that? I'm assuming that East Drummoyne area is also serviced by a ferry service? I think there was a ferry wharf at Birkenhead. Have you made representations around that issue?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** I have.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Do you think that's a solution, in terms of trying to get fewer vehicles coming out of that East Drummoyne area onto Victoria Road?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Absolutely. All options should be on the table to address this. We do want, where possible, people to mode shift and take public transport. Part of that is about developing a service that is convenient and reliable for commuters. In my submission I did mention the idea of restoring the Birkenhead Point ferry wharf.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Have you written to the Minister about that previously?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** It's in my submission.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is this an issue that—

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** I have written to the Minister on this.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** —at this point you're raising it, or is this something that you have been advocating around for a while?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** No, I have written to the Minister on this and I'm happy to provide that correspondence at a later date, if you like. I have written to the Minister on this. I've also written to the Minister and met with her about services in Drummoyne, particularly for the Drummoyne ferry wharf. That's currently part of the F3 Parramatta River route. What happens is that Drummoyne is one of the last stops on that route. Essentially, because they get full earlier on the river, once they get to Drummoyne those commuters cannot get on. It's a particular problem on the weekends. We've fought hard. I went and had a meeting with the Minister last year about this issue. We were thankful for the introduction of new services—seven every weekday and, I think, 26 on weekends—but people are still being left on the ferry wharf. I get emails every single weekend that people have been left abandoned on ferry wharves. It is a problem.

I've also raised with the Minister the possibility of starting ferry services further down the river, such as Cabarita or Abbotsford, to give Drummoyne commuters a chance to get on the ferry wharf. That is part of the problem. People are left with no alternative. Once you're down at Drummoyne ferry wharf it's a long way uphill to get a bus, so most people just get in their cars and commute. When you talk about a weekend, you've also got the added complexity of Birkenhead Point shopping centre and—how would we call it?—the complexity of traffic volumes that come to and from that centre. There are a lot of complicated flow-on effects, and it's all affecting what is happening on Victoria Road and the congestion and rat-running that we're seeing on local streets in Drummoyne. It is a complex problem. I'm very happy to sit down and work through it.



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**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I think there's a proposal from the chamber of commerce around using parking capacity at Birkenhead. Can you offer some comment about that?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** As in using parking capacity for—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Yes, at Birkenhead Point, the shopping centre, has got parking capacity that during weekdays is not particularly well utilised. It might be an opportunity to intersect with enhanced public transport. Do you have any comments about that?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Look, it's something that should absolutely be on the table. I'm very happy to, out of this process, meet with Birkenhead shopping centre to talk about it. I've had a meeting with Birkenhead. They are aware of the traffic issues. We all know—I've had many dealings on council with Birkenhead because of the traffic that it creates, particularly on a weekend. But absolutely, if we can look at putting people there and encouraging public transport use, absolutely we should be looking at that. But it doesn't solve the issue of people that are unable to get out of their suburb. So we need to look at the traffic light signalling to get people across and able to flow in and out of their suburb. Because right now it's really difficult. There are rat runs. That's what my community is telling me. People are driving erratically in narrow streets. It is just an accident waiting to happen, and something needs to be done.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Shetty, do you think that it was known during the design and approval process of Rozelle interchange that, as a result of the construction of this motorway and interchange, there would be the impacts that are now being felt in the side roads? Was it something that was outlined and laid out for everybody—the Government knew it was going to happen and it was approved anyway? A lot of people have been saying, "How the hell has this happened? Who approved it?" Do you know the answer to that?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** I find it very hard to believe that anyone who looked at the design here could have thought that all of those roads could be funnelled into these single-lane bottlenecks without the severe impacts that we've seen. There was not a great deal of communication about the single lane, particularly where Victoria Road joins the Anzac Bridge. There were some graphics and things that were done to demonstrate to people how to drive through the tunnels, including the Iron Cove Link, but there was no information provided to people that that single-lane merge point would be what we were left to deal with coming from Victoria Road onto the Anzac Bridge. The City West Link was actually reduced to a single lane a few weeks before the interchange was opened.

I wrote to the roads Minister proactively as soon as I realised that that was potentially the design that we were going to be left with in perpetuity to say that this is going to cause severe traffic impacts going forward if this is the plan. But little did we know at that stage that that was also what was going to be done on Victoria Road. I think it's really clear to anyone who was doing any modelling that there was going to be severe impacts, and it's been incredibly disappointing and frustrating for the community to not have this explained in advance. I think it's going to take a great deal of time for trust to be rebuilt between the Government, Transport for NSW and our community that decisions are being made to actually do something about this mess. It seems that the message from the Government, now that Transport has done what they can, is to suck it up. We've got to wait until 2028, when the Western Harbour Tunnel opens. Another toll road will solve this problem, and we just need to deal with what we've been left with.

**The CHAIR:** That was my next question, actually. Have you been informed that Transport for NSW have put in place every measure they can to best alleviate the congestion that's being felt on those local streets—they've done everything they can and there's no other solution?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** That is certainly the message that I've been getting from Transport for NSW. That's why I'm here to talk about the need for government intervention. We need bold design decisions to be made about the design of this interchange and what can be done. Given the billions of dollars that have been spent creating this interchange that will just feed money into the pockets of a private tollway company, it's important if there are solutions that might cost a little bit of money that those are fleshed out, because it might be a design change that's needed. We were told initially that nothing was off the table but when I've talked about design changes, they are certainly not on the table at the moment.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** I would echo those comments from my colleague. Absolutely, every option needs to be on the table. Considering—have we had a comprehensive traffic study? Is that something Transport for NSW is looking at? Is that something the Government will commit to? At least in my knowledge, I don't believe a recent traffic study has been done that is comprehensive and looks at the issues holistically. I certainly think that needs to happen if we're going to be serious about real and implementable solutions. If the Western Harbour Tunnel is going to help alleviate this situation, how far away is that? Three to five years? People cannot continue living the way that they are, affected by traffic in the way that they are in Drummoyne and in

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suburbs represented by my colleague here. We need to do something about it. We're here to address this inquiry. We are here to help as much as possible, to make sure we are able to identify ways we can make this better. We're willing to work constructively with the Government on this.

**The CHAIR:** It sound like your communities have been made the sacrificial lambs—

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** —for Transurban's projects and for Transurban's profits. Would that be a fair statement?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** Certainly from our perspective, that's the community sentiment at the moment. There doesn't seem to be a great deal of interest in resolving the problems to the extent that they need to be fixed. I can't stress enough what this community has been through with the construction. We're not looking just at the traffic impact but the other changes around the interchange have had a significant impact on people's lives. There's someone who lives in Annandale where the new M8 exit comes out onto the City West Link. There was never previously a set of traffic lights in that location. Now there are traffic lights there. They're dealing with everything that comes with the congestion around the traffic lights: honking and emergency sirens that have to be turned on when people are driving past that lane.

There are noise barriers that were constructed a long time ago to try to alleviate some of those noise issues for the residents of Annandale along the Railway Parade section that are past their use-by date. They're not working sufficiently for the new introduced traffic issues that have come about because of this fundamental design change that has been so incredibly impactful. It's not just that we're all stuck in our suburbs and stuck in our cars or buses trying to get out, trying to get to work or trying to get kids to school; we're actually seeing these broad implications where people are not safe crossing the road, people are not safe getting on their bicycles and people are dealing with noise and congestion around their homes that they've never had to deal with before.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** It's amenity—I would absolutely agree with that. The impacts on amenity are significant. I've also spoken to residents in Renwick Street, Drummoyne and Alexandra Street, Drummoyne that just cannot get out of their driveways because of the traffic congestion and the rat-running that is occurring. I've spoken to people with genuine concerns about the fact that if in an emergency they need an ambulance, an ambulance would struggle to navigate and get through the complex traffic situation there, where you've got narrow streets and cars banking up everywhere. It is a real problem. It's an amenity issue for our community. Victoria Road in Drummoyne is now being treated as just a way to funnel traffic, and the traffic congestion is immense.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you, both. Again, appreciating the way that you've been very constructive in your recommendations and your attempts to engage, I want to go to two things. First, I don't want to pre-empt what Transport for NSW will say, but it seems that some of the narrative has been around driver perception, drivers adjusting, drivers getting used to the new arrangements and some of that sort of narrative. What do you say to that in terms of resolving the problems and that kind of approach? What's your response to that?

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** I've read the correspondence, particularly the correspondence that comes from the Parliamentary Secretary that said something along the lines of, "Six months are needed for drivers to get themselves acquainted with the new road network and the new conditions." We're in our fifth month now. That's simply not acceptable. It's more than just about drivers getting themselves acquainted with the new road. It's a sincere lack of communication by Transport for NSW. I want to place on record that I had no briefing before the Rozelle interchange opened. What made it worse is that I had a senior communications employee from Transport contact me on the Monday after the opening to say, "Rozelle interchange opens on Sunday 26 November"—a day after. Had we been included and consulted with, we could have spread the message out to our community. That opportunity wasn't given to us.

Part of the problem here is that, at least in Drummoyne, the feeling is that our requests are being met with deaf ears. Nobody seems to be listening. We had Transport for NSW executives come address our community at that community meeting, and they were trying to convince us that travel times haven't changed. You can't say that to 150 people who have shown up to a community meeting at late notice if there was no problem. There is absolutely a problem. Tell that to the people that spend 45 minutes just trying to get onto Victoria Road, let alone trying to navigate the traffic through Victoria Road. Communication is a key flaw here and lessons need to be learned from this debacle.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** I think part of the problem is that Transport for NSW are measuring the time that it's taking to travel down Victoria Road but not looking in more detail at the surrounding streets and those impacts.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** That's right.

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**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** What the member for Drummoyne has been talking about is people trying to get onto Victoria Road. What we're seeing around Annandale, Lilyfield, Rozelle and Balmain is that people are getting stuck in other places that may not be monitored. It's that time to actually get onto those arterial roads that is causing the problems.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Correct.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you. They're excellent points. I want to come to the suggestion about monitoring and the suggestion that you've made to have a comprehensive local traffic study and how that might be a way to take into account those local roads and those people trying to merely get out of the driveway to wherever they're going. Do you want to expand on that and whether you'd support that?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** That would certainly be a welcome thing for my community, so that we can really understand in great detail what is going on on the ground. We're also seeing Transport for NSW recommending that people leave earlier or later to miss the peak times or that they use Parramatta Road as an alternative, which is longer and less convenient and is pushing the problem elsewhere.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Get your kids to school at 7.00 a.m. Leave them there.

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** Yes, it's fine.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** I totally agree with my colleague. If we are going to go down the route of having a traffic study, we need to have immediate and implementable traffic mitigation strategies. That should be the key in this traffic study. I've made some recommendations in my submission, like reviewing traffic light sequencing, which we've spoken about; reviewing that section particularly after the Iron Cove Bridge up to the Anzac Bridge on Victoria Road—we need to look at that section there. Certainly the anecdotal evidence is that the two bus lanes cause a lot of traffic and my community have told me—people that use the bus service—that particularly the bendy buses cannot manoeuvre through the second bus lane and so stick to the one or basically drive between both. We've got a look at it. I absolutely agree that bus prioritisation must take place but we have to look at it holistically and part of that is the left-hand turn up at Darling Street. From what my community has told me, most people use the Terry Street left-hand but they don't go up and use the dedicated Darling Street turns so maybe we can look at a way of shifting the intersection there. I have made recommendations about that in my submission.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Maybe a meeting—not in a pub upstairs but where people can access it.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** That's right.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Thank you both very much for your submissions and your evidence today—and the recommendations, which obviously come from a connection with concerns of the community. I want to go back to some evidence given by you, Ms Shetty, to give Ms Di Pasqua a chance to respond. Ms Shetty, you noted concerns about the tolling arrangements and involvement of Transurban. Ms Di Pasqua, you were nodding along during Ms Shetty's evidence. I wondered if you could put on record your views on the tolling arrangements and the involvement of Transurban. You were nodding so I want to give you the opportunity to have a say on that.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** Thank you. I've nodded along with a lot of the points raised by my colleague because we are experiencing the same issues and our communities are experiencing the same issues. This is about finding solutions and that's why I'm here. I want to find solutions for my community.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Sorry, if I could, in the words of my colleagues during budget estimates, redirect you to my question, which was about any views or any representations you have made about concerns that the community has raised in some of the submissions about the tolling arrangements.

**Ms STEPHANIE DI PASQUA:** I take you to my submission where I actually talk about spreading traffic flows, including those coming onto the Anzac Bridge, particularly in peak periods. That would mean we need to look at all entry points to the Anzac Bridge.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Okay, so no comment.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Obviously there are some hard structural problems with the design. It seems that the proposed solution is actually the Western Harbour Tunnel. Ms Shetty, do you support the Western Harbour Tunnel project?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** It's not something that we've been particularly supportive of. The community is pretty clear that we don't think building more toll roads is something that's going to solve congestion issues. It

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certainly induces traffic to build more toll roads, rather than focusing your transport budgets on spending money on active and public transport, so it's not a project that we've been supportive of, no.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So you don't support the Western Harbour Tunnel proposal?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** It's going ahead. At this point that is the excuse that is being used—for us to just wait until that happens—and that that's going to resolve these congestion issues, but it's not a project that we had supported in the past.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I think both of you have suggested that there be metering put on the main connection from the M4 connection. That's obviously going to lead to delays for those motorists coming from Western Sydney, who have got much longer journey times. What do you say to those motorists about why the interests of your community should be prioritised over their interests?

**Ms KOBI SHETTY:** What we've seen is a significant improvement in the travel time from those western suburbs, and we've even seen speed limit increases to try and further improve the time that's taken from the western suburbs in to the Anzac Bridge. I'm not asking for the Government to make it difficult for people to get in from the western suburbs but if you can slow that down by a few minutes in order to regain some balance so that local people aren't left in their local streets and trapped in places where essentially there are no alternatives, that's something that bears consideration. It was certainly something that I was assured was being considered when the interchange first opened but then was something that was quickly taken off the table when I raised again in January. I don't want to see commuters from the western suburbs paying the price but they have had significant improvements already to their journey time. We need to get the balance right and make sure that we're not saving people coming from Western Sydney five minutes while the impact that's felt from that is people in the inner west and surrounding Rozelle interchange copping a half an hour delay to their travel time.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. We've run out of time for this session. Thanks so much for appearing today and for the work that you have done. The secretariat will be in touch with any supplementary questions.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

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**Mr MICHAEL MEGNA**, Mayor, City of Canada Bay, sworn and examined

**Mr DARCY BYRNE**, Mayor, Inner West Council, affirmed and examined

**Mr KENDALL BANFIELD**, Senior Strategic Transport Planner, Inner West Council, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our next witnesses. No doubt you both have short opening statements to make?

**DARCY BYRNE:** Thanks very much, Chair. We appreciate the opportunity to come along today and talk about the debacle that has been the Rozelle interchange. It's important that everybody understands just how prolonged the impacts have been during the planning and construction phases of WestConnex. That's the reason that our community is so frustrated—that, having finally got to the end of the construction phase, the benefits that were promised in terms of improved travel times have not materialised. Our experience throughout the last decade or more with the planning of the WestConnex project has been really terrible. Just to go back to the beginning, there were several hundred homes that were lost in Haberfield and St Peters and, as the project has progressed across the inner west, all of the construction impacts in terms of noise, loss of homes, drilling and so on—the inner west has been the epicentre of that.

We'd been promised that, when the interchange was completed, there would be an improved road network. In fact, we were told that traffic volumes were going to be reduced on Victoria Road by up to 50 per cent. So we were promised nirvana, but all we've got is a tunnel to a traffic jam and a park full of asbestos. What we want now is for this Committee to consider what surgical interventions are needed to fix the Rozelle interchange. Transport for NSW has undertaken a range of mitigations and the situation has improved a little bit. But what we need is a surgical intervention. Mitigations on the Rozelle interchange are like offering someone vitamin pills when what they need is a triple bypass. We can't wait five years for the Western Harbour Tunnel to open. We've still got tens of thousands of people across the region who are not able to get to work each morning because this motorway interchange is not functioning.

Lastly, I just want to say that I hope that your considerations will include the role of Transurban, John Holland and CPB in this debacle. Gee, they've done well out of it. John Holland and CPB made a fortune out of the construction. Transurban have now got a monopoly over the motorway and the motorway network in Sydney. We're paying the highest tolls of any city in the world. In fact, Transurban have probably done well out of the fact that the interchange has been so poor, because everyone's being pressured and directed into the tunnels that they're making money out of. There's got to be a lesson learnt out of this that building more motorways simply because they can be flogged off as soon as you finish building them is not a solution to transport in a global city like Sydney.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Byrne. Mr Megna?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Since the opening of the Rozelle interchange, for up to four hours a day, the Drummoyne peninsula, its community, its businesses and its people are brought to a standstill. Canada Bay feels it every morning and every afternoon as their quiet neighbourhood streets transform into frantic rat-running arteries. Commuters face the choice of either creeping along Victoria Road through the Drummoyne peninsula or turning off the main artery and taking suburban streets to get to work on time. Cars speed down quiet streets. Commuters deliberately drive the wrong way down one-way streets. They run red lights to cut through intersections that allow one car per sequence to turn back onto the main road.

For residents, crossing roads and walking kids to school has become a daunting task. What were once 10-minute journeys in the car around our LGA have become odysseys. Residents in what were once quiet streets can't even get out of their driveways due to a conga line of cars choking these streets. The bandaid solution, after initial public outcry, was to amend traffic light sequencing to ease congestion in Rozelle and Balmain, which holds back traffic in Drummoyne so as to ease congestion at the Anzac Bridge. This is just kicking the can down the road, shifting traffic further west and creating enormous problems in our area. The Premier has said publicly that the answer is the opening of the Western Harbour Tunnel in four years time, so is our community expected to put up with this mess for another four years or longer?

We'd like to know who did the modelling for this interchange, how did they get it so wrong, and are these the same people who are now telling the current Government that it will all get better with a new Western Harbour tunnel, which won't open for another four or more years? At a recent public meeting that was alluded to earlier, that I attended, the department confirmed that, until the new tunnel opens, there are no real solutions available to them. At that meeting a senior Transport official told us to leave five minutes earlier or five minutes later, or try a different route into the city. He obviously had no idea that five minutes either side won't fix a 45-minute commute problem, which used to be a 15- to 20-minute commute. And what? Take a different route? Which one? An already congested Lyons Road, which takes us into an already congested Great North Road into Five Dock, which takes

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us into an already congested Parramatta Road? Or take a ferry that is already full from the time that it hits Canada Bay, full from up the river?

Broadly speaking, the issues can be broken down into the following categories: community safety, congestion on local roads, rat-running, impact on local business. Whilst some may see the Rozelle interchange as a "Victoria Road problem", in reality, along the Drummoyne peninsula alone, there are kilometres of local streets experiencing these issues and the congestion is backed up beyond Drummoyne to Five Dock and throughout the LGA. At our recent meeting with Transport for NSW, it was made clear to us that the department's expectation is that council will need to implement local traffic management plans to address the congestion issues caused by the Rozelle interchange. Does that mean that the State Government's problem has now become council's problem at our cost financially to repair the damage to our local streets and to the amenity of our neighbourhoods? Sorry, but Transport and the Government have broken it. They own it; they need to fix it.

The expectation is that we are going to get lumped with providing solutions, that we will take on the financial burden of the degradation of our roads and that we will be responsible for the installation of safety mechanisms on our local streets, redirecting our resources, both physical and financial, to fix the problems caused by this inadequate planning. Also, at the same time, the Government proposes changes to planning mechanisms that would see thousands more dwellings in Drummoyne, which is thousands more cars, thousands more people trying to get to work. Our community is angry, but they welcome this inquiry into the mess that is the Rozelle interchange. But they will not merely sit back and be told that the issues will be fixed by the delivery of yet another tunnel in however many years time. It needs to be fixed and it needs to be fixed now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The CHAIR:** In terms of Inner West Council's submission, I was interested in the analysis that you did around the way in which the traffic modelling appeared to be undertaken to justify WestConnex at the early days. Your submission suggests that it was known the whole way along that WestConnex would induce demand, that WestConnex would create more traffic. Is that essentially what you're arguing?

**DARCY BYRNE:** I might hand over to Mr Banfield to answer the question.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, to the traffic expert—Mr Banfield?

**KENDALL BANFIELD:** Yes, we are. As we pointed out in the submission, induced traffic was modelled, although we believe it was underestimated and we pointed that out in the submission.

**The CHAIR:** WestConnex comes forward, they say, "We've got a solution here," or, "We're going to build this motorway that is going to produce more traffic." Yet, Mr Byrne, you're arguing that the public was also promised that traffic would reduce in particular areas. It just seems that there are mixed messages in terms of what this was going to deliver for the community. But it's certainly the case that it has created so much more traffic in many of the inner suburbs of Sydney—inner west.

**DARCY BYRNE:** The former Government said so frequently that traffic was going to be reduced by 50 per cent on Victoria Road that, after the government changed and we got a briefing from Transport for NSW, I was very eager to hear about this boulevard that was going to be created on Victoria Road and the advice we then received was, "No, it's not going to be reduced by 50 per cent." In fact, they were worried that it was going to be an F for fail on day one after the Rozelle interchange opened, particularly on Victoria Road. Worse still, we'd been told that there was going to be tree planting, active transport lanes. When we asked about what the budget was for public domain improvements on Victoria Road, there was no money at all. You can understand why our local community is so frustrated. They've put up with all of the construction impacts that went on for years and years but were promised there was going to be a positive outcome at the end of it. Instead they woke up on day one and found they were trapped in their homes.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Megna, it seems that the community in terms of your constituents have been sacrificed for something—their lives, their streets, their commutes. It doesn't sound like they're going to get any better. Is that how they're feeling?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** Yes, definitely. I think you'll be hearing from some of them this afternoon. As I said, they can't back out of their driveways. Some are getting out late at night to reverse their cars and back them in so they can drive out. It's all of that rigmarole. As the State member for Drummoyne mentioned earlier, it's getting across Drummoyne, it's getting from the eastern side to the western side and vice versa rather than up and down Victoria Road. That's a problem in itself. But getting around—we've got a lot of schools around there, a lot of local schools, a lot of commuters, people dropping kids off to school, kids walking to school. When you're having people who are frustrated, who've been waiting half an hour probably to get through a couple of phases of lights—there's no excuse for running a red light or going the wrong way up a one-way street, but the frustration is building and it'll be an accident any day.

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**The CHAIR:** We have had one submission that listed some of the feedback from constituents whose lives have been impacted so much. One of them said that they just can't live in the area anymore. They're actively looking to move outside because there is no way out, in terms of their work hours. Are you hearing any stories like that in terms of the impact?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** No, Madam Chair, I haven't heard that from people saying that they're moving out of the area. But if people are making that submission, I can see why they'd be feeling like doing that. Probably renters as well, but for people that own a home, it takes a while to sell a house and get it on the market and get out. But renters will probably think "I'm outta here" if they know they have to wait four or five years for the solution.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Byrne, you talked about surgical solutions. The previous witnesses were talking about structural change, very substantial changes. What would the council like to see? It's really, in some ways, the Government's responsibility to come up with this, but I'm sure you've put some thought to it.

**DARCY BYRNE:** The transport agency has undertaken some mitigations. But as I say, the mitigations so far are like offering vitamin pills to people who actually need a triple bypass. We don't know what surgical or structural interventions are being contemplated by Transport for NSW or what's achievable. We don't know what the former Government considered, either, because there was so much secrecy around the project. But it is our firm belief that we can't go on like this indefinitely. A five-year wait is simply unsustainable; people can't go on for five more minutes like this. We want the outcome of this inquiry to be that those potential surgical interventions are considered very carefully.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Thank you for coming along today, and for your submissions and your advocacy for your communities. Mr Megna, I wanted to go to your submission. You have mentioned some proposals to constructively address and some recommendations about how these issues that you've heard from your community can be addressed, particularly the congestion. The adjustment of traffic light signal phases seems to be something that—I don't want to pre-empt Transport's submission, but it seems like that's something they're not so keen to do. Instead, we've heard about potentially people getting used to it, taking six months to adjust or leaving earlier or later, I think it was mentioned from the meeting. Can you speak specifically to the traffic signal adjustments, which is what you and your community are saying is important, and also your engagement with Transport for NSW? How are they responding?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** We've been regularly meeting over many months with Transport for NSW—actually, for quite a few years, Transport came to many workshops at Canada Bay Council, at our chambers at Drummoyne, and told us how well this was going to work, that it was a dream run into the city. We were all looking forward to a dream run into the city—anything was better—but it was actually better as it was rather than as it is now. It wasn't so bad, I don't think, at the opening, but when the signalling change happened on the Rozelle-Balmain side—that's my bit about kicking the can down the road. There is no blame to my friend here, Darcy Byrne, but it may have solved his problem but just kept on moving it west. I don't want to keep on moving it further west, into the Ryde and Hunters Hill areas. We need to solve that problem. Whether you can get more cars out, rather than one or two cars per sequence, there needs to be a lot of thought. I'm not a traffic engineer. I don't know how to solve it. I know what the problem is—I can tell you the problem—but I don't know how to solve it.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** But if Transport are saying it's not a problem and it's just taking time to adjust, what would you say to that? We have heard from the local member that it's not just getting onto Victoria Road and into the city; it's in fact getting across the peninsula from one side to the other. Can you just elaborate on that?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** If you can't get across a very busy, choked road, there's a problem. There is a problem with traffic lights. There is a problem with cars coming from the west going east. Our people need to be getting across those lanes. You need the sequencing to change to allow more people to get across.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Has Transport indicated to you that that's something they would consider? Or have they just said, "No, we'll give an adjustment"?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** No, they said, "You'll have to do your own local area traffic management plan." You don't just whip one of those out of your back pocket. It's something you need to plan and spend money on. Our staff then have to direct resources from what they were doing and other plans that we're doing elsewhere to concentrate on this. We didn't cause the problem.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Surely it's a shared problem, isn't it?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** That's true, too. Exactly.

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**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** It's something that should be coordinated. I think you've suggested a review of traffic management strategies and the traffic review, as has the local member. I think that's in common. Have you been given feedback on whether that's possibility, or is it just a "no" at this point?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** From the last meeting we had with traffic, the thing they left up in the air was, "Do your own local area traffic management plan and fingers crossed for the next four years."

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Did they offer to pay?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** No.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** On the journey times, you've mentioned, I think we've heard, that potentially there's been some narrative around journey times being better, in fact, on Victoria Road. But you've indicated that in fact the data highlights that travel times have increased.

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** Yes.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Can you just speak to that aspect?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** We were told, at that infamous public meeting on top of the pub, that traffic times are either better or no worse than what they were. Then why spend a billion dollars on a tunnel to have traffic times no worse than what they were? We could've just left the situation as it was. Our people in Drummoyne could get across fairly easily, or a lot more easily than what they can now. Leaving five minutes earlier or five minutes later was just fairyland. Five minutes on either side will not get you into the city or get you across the suburbs any better.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I will just finish on this, Chair, if I may. I think we heard from the local members about the level of engagement. You said you've had some meetings, but we did hear that one of those meetings was in a pub upstairs. Would you be supportive of another opportunity for a community meeting, where everyone's invited, everything is on the table and there's the opportunity for those local community members to engage directly and put these proposals, potentially, with Transport?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** Most certainly. We were happy to facilitate it at the council, where we could've had 150, 200 people there. It'd be live-streamed, like these premises are live-streamed.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** And you've got disability access?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** Sorry?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** You've got disability access—no stairs?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** We've got disability access. People that didn't want to go into a pub, where there's gambling and alcohol, would be able to attend, either from their home or at the council chambers. We had that opportunity to do it, but I found out about the public meeting at the pub on social media. And we're just ignored by the representations that we were making.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** That's not fair.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Mr Byrne, projects of this scale obviously are very long in the planning, development and execution. I wondered if you could talk a bit about the overall experience under the former Government about the planning and construction of the broader WestConnex?

**DARCY BYRNE:** For 12 years under the former Government, throughout the life of the WestConnex project, we were given no information, no engagement and no respect. When local residents raised legitimate issues—thousands and thousands of them did—about the construction impacts, that was treated as a public relations issue. They were fobbed off to people from John Holland or CPB who were communications experts, as opposed to engineers. We've had much greater engagement with Transport for NSW in the last year. The problem is, we're now getting to understand just how chaotic the decision-making was around the entirety of this project.

I have no complaint about the level of engagement that we're getting from Transport for NSW now. Howard Collins, when I rang him and said, "Would you be willing to turn up at Balmain Town Hall?", to his credit came and did so. He said, "Do you think I'm going to come out of there in a box?" I said, "No, but you're not going to be showered with roses, either." There is a lot of distrust in our local community for John Holland, CPB, Transport for NSW and Transurban. Everyone's already had a very bad experience of them over the last decade or more. Now when they're saying, "Just trust us on the clean-up of asbestos," or, "No, we're definitely doing all the mitigations," people don't believe them—and I don't believe them.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Banfield, in your submission you talk about the modelling based on "predict and provide" and then you posit "vision and validate" as an alternative. I wonder whether you could



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maybe elaborate a bit on the difference between the two, and why "predict and provide" is problematic and shouldn't be relied on?

**KENDALL BANFIELD:** That's a good question. "Predict and provide" is the traditional traffic engineering approach to solving traffic problems, where the modelling is done and you forecast the future traffic. Then you look at, mainly, the intersections, because that's where the congestion often is, and you look at where level of service of those intersections falls below a certain point. Usually the response to that is to widen the intersection or widen the section of road or whatever. We think that that's a flawed method, because ultimately it means there's this endless process of providing more traffic capacity, all at the expense of liveability and economic viability.

It means that it becomes more and more difficult for people to get around easily, and, ultimately, an unsustainable city and an uneconomic city. I guess WestConnex is all part of that. It's part of increasing road capacity based on forecasts. In contrast to that, the vision and validate is going to the community and saying, "What's your vision for the future of your neighbourhood, your region or, ultimately, your city?" Usually people say, "We want less traffic, and we want to make it easier for people to get around by public transport, walking and cycling." So all the traffic planning is rallied around the vision rather than the traditional approach where it rallies around the model. That's a short summary.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Assuming we go with the vision and validate approach, Mr Byrne talked about a "surgical intervention", but maybe the solution is actually in terms of trying to mode shift and get more people onto public transport. What enhancements do you think are required to facilitate the necessary mode shift to take the number of cars off the road so that the traffic flows more effectively?

**DARCY BYRNE:** We're certainly advocating for an increase in public transport services now to the inner west and to the Balmain peninsula in particular. Additional ferry services and additional bus services can make a difference. It was our position right from the very beginning that the western metro should've been a higher priority than WestConnex. Now we're in a position where WestConnex is open, we've spent more than \$20 billion on it and we don't have a functional motorway system, but the western metro is still a decade away. So that's a lost decade. They should've been reversed; it should've been a greater priority to get the western metro up and running. It's very difficult to say precisely what interventions, now, can fix this problem. I think it's on Transport for NSW to work that out. As Mayor Megna said, we're identifying the problem. We're stating that it's unacceptable and unsustainable, and we want Transport for NSW to put forward broader solutions than they have so far, because we can't go on like this.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** In your submission and the summary of the recommendations, you talk about "the need to physically, visually and psychologically capture road capacity by opening public transport". Forgive my ignorance. It could be terminology I'm not used to. I'm not entirely clear what that means, particularly the "psychologically capture road capacity" part of it—my apologies if it's a term that I'm just not familiar with.

**DARCY BYRNE:** That's okay. I didn't draft the submission personally. But if I can speak to the broader issue, because there have been so many assertions that Victoria Road was going to be a tree-lined boulevard and that traffic flows were going to be reduced by 50 per cent, and we had so little actual planning for the future of Victoria Road from the former Government, we went away and undertook our own Rozelle master plan for Victoria Road and Darling Street based on those assumptions. That involved additional active transport lanes on Victoria Road, tree planting. It was all predicated on the idea that there was going to be space opened up for active transport and for greater—not pedestrianisation, but to make the place a more pleasant place to be.

We'd already completed that work, largely, when we got the truth out of Transport for NSW, after the Government changed, that there wasn't going to be a 50 per cent reduction. The member for Balmain and myself didn't agree on this point. Her advocacy both at council and in the Parliament was that we should reduce lanes further on Victoria Road prior to the opening of the Rozelle interchange. After the briefing that I received, I knew that that could be a disastrous impact and so we held back from actually adopting that master plan. At one stage the member for Balmain actually had competing petitions on her website, one saying that there should be more lanes on Victoria Road and one saying that there should be less lanes on Victoria Road. I don't blame her for that because we were misled by Transport for NSW over such a long period of time.

The argument that the officers have put to us, and there are a lot of transport experts who will say this, is if you're going to create a piece of infrastructure like the Rozelle interchange then you need to dedicate the lane space to active transport straightaway, otherwise you get that induced demand from motor vehicles. I think we're past that point now with the Rozelle interchange. We know that the demand is there. There's not any scope for reducing lanes on Victoria Road so we want Transport for NSW to urgently look at what are the surgical interventions that you could do across the network to make sure that this unsustainable situation doesn't go on.

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**The CHAIR:** Going back to the design for Rozelle interchange, I'm wondering what Inner West Council's involvement with that was. When did you first see the design? What feedback did you provide, firstly?

**DARCY BYRNE:** We made detailed submissions to every single stage of WestConnex, and our experience was that those submissions weren't taken seriously by the Government. We had very little engagement or discussion. It was always about what they were going to do to us, rather than talking about what we could do together. I'll give you one example. When stage one of WestConnex opened, we knew from our own analysis that that was going to result in rat-running around Leichhardt and Haberfield. So we went and spent our own funds on developing a local traffic plan. We proposed \$30 million worth of mitigations to the Government. We never even received a reply. We asked for the data to be made transparently available about what the impact was on the traffic network. We never received that data.

The experience that Mayor Megna has just described in Drummoyne, now, is the same experience we've had right throughout the project, which was that we weren't provided with transparent information, we weren't included in planning or decision-making. It's frustrating because we did say all along you don't have to be a genius to work out that if you have so much induced traffic demand coming to the same number of lanes on Victoria Road and the Anzac Bridge, it was going to be a tunnel to a traffic jam. There's no joy for us in having been right about it, but that is at the heart of the frustration that local people are feeling.

**The CHAIR:** So you've fed in from the beginning, basically. Was the original design that the council saw, that you saw, very clear in terms of what it was going to do to local roads?

**DARCY BYRNE:** It's changed so much over time. There have been so many different iterations. I remember when Barry O'Farrell first announced WestConnex it was going to run along or underneath Parramatta Road. That's completely different to the design that we've ended up with. One thing that's been constant throughout the design process is that we've had bugger all input. Our submissions—which, as it turns out, were perfectly correct—were not taken seriously, and that's a big part of our frustration.

**The CHAIR:** In your submission you also mention that, for projects like this that had such substantial amendments to them, they needed to be reconsidered again in the planning process as a whole in terms of their impacts. There were so many changes with such significant impact over time. I think that's what Inner West Council is arguing, in terms of going forward, recommendations for changes to the approvals system. Mr Banfield?

**KENDALL BANFIELD:** The current system of modifying EISs, or mods, as we call them—I will say, we do have input into each mod. But it is difficult on a large project when the modifications, or the mods, are significant. It came to the point where really a new environmental impact statement is needed, and it is difficult for council to keep track of all the changes. Yes, it does feel like shooting at a moving target at times. Although I do acknowledge there are times when a modification could lead to an improvement as well.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Megna, what about Canada Bay, in relation to the level of involvement in the original design phase—approvals process of Rozelle interchange and the feedback that your council provided about the impacts—was it clear from the start that the impacts would be as horrific as they are now, in reality? Was council arguing, I assume very strenuously, that it shouldn't go ahead?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** No, Madam Chair. By the workshops that we had with Transport officials, it was going to be—this was the nirvana; this was going to be the new way of travelling. It would take cars off the road. It would be easier to get into the city. Rat-running wouldn't even occur; it would be just a dream run. We were never told about the two bus lanes, as far as I can recall—that may be something that's come in later—which seems to be the problem. As I think we heard from previous speakers earlier, to get into the left lane to turn, these buses from the middle lane are blocking the traffic, which is causing more of a hold-up. We weren't told a lot of that detail. It was just all the pretty pictures and that was it. We didn't suffer what Inner West was suffering, with rows and rows of houses being knocked down and the very big loss to their amenity. We were just having a tunnel going underneath from the end of our city at Drummoyne—right at the tail end—going underneath, so we weren't expecting any drama to the extent of what we're getting now.

**The CHAIR:** So it seems that the approvals process didn't tell the truth. The design and what was approved—what the community consulted on and what your council gave feedback on—actually wasn't the ultimate design in terms of the impact that it is having on the community.

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** I can't go back, Madam Chair, on what was given to us but I do remember that this was just a great initiative of Transport. It was going to solve any traffic problems into the future with a growing city. I think it was versed as "The city's growing. There'll be more people. There's more development. This is going to get the cars off the road but underneath the road."

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**The CHAIR:** I do want to make sure that we ask a question or two about the asbestos situation and what unfolded there. Again, in the submission there was a lot of criticism around the lack of contact. I understand Inner West Council has tried to contact John Holland and CPB Contractors. You say that it's unknown what actions the companies have undertaken to date. That was probably written six weeks ago or something. I wanted to see whether that is still the case, Mr Byrne.

**DARCY BYRNE:** John Holland and CPB have moved way too slow on the clean-up of the asbestos mulch in the Rozelle Parklands because they don't believe that they are ultimately culpable for the asbestos contamination—and that may well be the case. You can see that they've got an obvious interest in trying to cut costs on the clean-up effort because if the person or entity that is found culpable goes out the back door then John Holland and CPB will be worried that they're going to wear those costs. I was down at Rozelle Parklands every day across the whole of summer. John Holland and CPB said that they had 40 people on site doing the clean-up; I reckon it was less than a dozen. We've been trying to warn Transport for NSW and the EPA throughout that time that the clean-up was not being undertaken quickly enough because it wasn't being resourced properly. There weren't enough staff on site there.

Because our experience of John Holland and CPB has been so poor over such a long period of time and there are thousands and thousands of local residents around the interchange who've had legitimate concerns fobbed off or treated as a public relations issue across the last five years during the construction, we're not starting from a position of trust. In our local community Transport for NSW, John Holland, CPB and Transurban are all considered to be entities that don't really give a damn about Rozelle. People feel that way—rightly—and we'd like to see Transport for NSW being a bit tougher with John Holland and CPB in the future.

**The CHAIR:** You also mention in your submission that you weren't happy with Transport for NSW or the EPA in terms of their response—that they were too slow to communicate. Do you care to comment any further about that?

**DARCY BYRNE:** I thought it was a mistake from the EPA for the clean-up order to be issued only to Transport for NSW when it was John Holland and CPB who were actually undertaking the work. It seemed obvious to us that the order should have been issued to them as well. That might've put a bit more pressure on them to get it done. Thankfully, the asbestos mulch has now all been removed. There was an extension granted and the second deadline has been met but only half the park has been reopened. There are hundreds and hundreds of trees and shrubs that have died in the meantime, and we're very worried that John Holland and CPB will cut costs again on restoring the park. This is the park that was meant to be the compensation for the enormous impacts that our community had experienced throughout WestConnex. I'll just add this point as well: You know that when they sold off WestConnex it created a \$5 billion fund called WestInvest. There was one council between the CBD and the Blue Mountains that was excluded from applying for funds from WestInvest. I'll let you guess which one. The Inner West—the one place where WestConnex was actually built. So you can see why all of this is building into such a sense of frustration for our local community.

**The CHAIR:** Before I throw to Ms Ward for a question, I understand the parks were shut off in terms of the community going through—the potential for kids, dogs, whatever—while there was asbestos, but you're also saying that to go in and water the plants, substantial trees—as in smaller trees—workers weren't allowed in either and so we've seen a lot of the trees die. Is that you're saying?

**DARCY BYRNE:** Because of the removal of the mulch—some of the vegetation was dependent upon the mulch in order to be able to grow. The fact that the trees were planted in November and December is not ideal. We don't do any street tree planting in those periods because trees die. I don't think that was necessarily a case of negligence but a consequence of the whole park being a contaminated site.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Mayor Megna, one of the terms of reference is the adequacy of Transport for NSW in relation to public communication in the period leading to and directly after the opening of the Rozelle interchange. I wondered if you could assist the Committee by addressing your experience of that communication with Transport for the six months before the opening and the six months that have been subsequent to it opening.

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** I know that our council staff—the general manager and directors—would've been in contact with Transport on a regular basis. I'm not privy to the conversations that happened but I certainly wasn't getting any feedback from our senior staff that there was going to be a problem on day one—and there wasn't a problem on day one. It was on day whatever, when the changes happened up in Rozelle and Balmain, that things started getting messy down our end. I have handed up my submission to Hansard. Could I also hand up the rat-running map? All that red is the rat-running. That's our Drummoyne peninsula and that's where people are going. I can hand that up as well so it forms part of the submission.

**The CHAIR:** Do you also have a digital copy of that, by any chance?

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**MICHAEL MEGNA:** I can get it to you. I'm sure we can.

**The CHAIR:** That would be useful. Thank you so much.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** On that rat run, then, given that you have said there's these rat runs and the community has said that there's these rat runs, is it the case the Transport has said, "Okay, we'll look at it," or "We'll address that," or "We'll take that on board"? Or has it been "Drivers need to change their behaviour"? Is that what has been—I want to get an understanding of the feel.

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** We've been told multiple times now from Transport, "It'll take six months,"—we're into month five—"Take an alternative route of transport,"—I've already said the ferries are full. By the time they hit Canada Bay, they're full from up the river. From Sydney Olympic Park—by the time they get to Cabarita and then in to us, that's it. Forget about it. It'd be great if there were more ferries on the start—or skip a few stations so that we can pick up the bulk. You can see by that map that Canada Bay just runs along the river. People live there; they can walk five minutes to a wharf. It's no big deal to walk to a wharf. I'm sure people don't want to get in their car and sit for half an hour, or 15 or 20 minutes, or an hour to get into town when they can take a leisurely ride along the Parramatta River. That needs to be fixed.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Just on that, then, would you say more frequent services or more services?

**MICHAEL MEGNA:** Yes, more services or skip some ferry stops and do every second one, or whatever—they have to work all that out. They know where the people are. I've gone into the city numerous times and you see the ferry go by. It doesn't even pull in because they ask on the ferry, "Anyone getting off at Drummoyne?" If no-one's getting off at Drummoyne, they just go by you and you wave at them as they go by. You get back in the car, you drive up to either another ferry spot—we're lucky that we've got quite a few. We've had them over the last 30 years now. You can go to Chiswick or you can go somewhere else, but by that stage you're running, you're looking for a parking spot, you're trying to get into town and you end up frustrated. There's got to be a better way of doing it.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you all for attending. That's the end of this session. The secretariat will be in touch if you've taken any questions on notice, which I don't believe you have, or if there are any supplementary questions by members.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

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**Ms BELINDA DALY**, Vice-President, Balmain Rozelle Chamber of Commerce, sworn and examined

**Mr JONATHAN FLETCHER**, Member, Balmain Rozelle Chamber of Commerce, sworn and examined

**Mr MARK CHAPMAN**, Committee Executive, The Leichhardt Collective (formerly Leichhardt Annandale Business Chamber), sworn and examined

**Mr SERGE DERKATCH**, President, Drummoyne Business Chamber, sworn and examined

**The CHAIR:** Welcome to our next witnesses. Thanks so much for coming along. Do each of you have a short opening statement to make? Ms Daly?

**BELINDA DALY:** I'm here today as Vice-President of the Balmain Rozelle Chamber of Commerce. We represent 160 member businesses and more than 350 businesses that trade within three kilometres of the Rozelle interchange. I stand before you today to shed light on the impact on our local business community over the past four years. What was envisioned as a transformative project has unfortunately led to a slow and methodical rebranding of Balmain and Rozelle, not as a thriving hub but as an area to avoid due to perceived traffic congestion. The businesses in our community have struggled immensely due to decreased foot traffic and customers unwilling to navigate the traffic congestion throughout the four-year period but, even more significantly, now that the project is complete.

This has led to considerable economic challenges for our local establishments and even those wanting to open businesses in our area. While the interchange may benefit those outside our community, its adverse effects have left us grappling with a legacy that undermines the vibrancy of our area, our beautiful village, our unique high street and our heritage. We surveyed all our members and received significant feedback on the challenges. Simple things like courier and supply deliveries are more difficult. We know that more than 65 per cent of workers have longer commutes to their jobs; they do not live nearby. These are people working in retail and hospitality.

Local businesses are telling us it's harder to retain and attract staff. And it's weekdays and weekends that are affected, weekends being our most important trading days. We urgently need substantial investment to revitalise our community and businesses, which have borne the brunt of long-term construction, yet we feel we have been forgotten. The promise of freedom with the opening of the Rozelle interchange has sadly resulted in businesses feeling caged, unable to thrive as they once did. Now I'd like to introduce Jonathan Fletcher, who owns a business, Running Science. He is a member of our chamber and, like so many other local small businesses, is experiencing the effects of the Rozelle interchange.

**JONATHAN FLETCHER:** Thank you, Belinda. Thank you, everybody, for inviting me along. To echo part of what Belinda has said, I am here to represent the local business community. I've owned a business in the area for over 10 years. And I'm very—Belinda would agree—connected with all the different businesses. I have the pulse of this community. I know how vibrant it was and I have a very deep feeling about how that's changed. That comes from a place of being embedded in that community day in, day out for the last 10 years. I'll add to say that I am very protective of our community—that's our local business community—as I think everybody is. Community is one thing that is extremely important and I think the world is really waking up to that at the moment.

Things that affect the community, like projects like this, which—there are going to be effects. I understand that. I take that to heart, and it is serious and it's worth talking about. If there are things that we can do better for the next project, I'm a willing participant in that. Last thing I'll say is I'm definitely here to show solidarity in message with Belinda, with Serge and with Mark on what we have felt, what we've experienced. I'm not here today and I'm not the kind of person that likes to just point fingers and things. It's often very easy to do, often doesn't land us in a good place. I'm here to participate in a process that I would love to think yields a good outcome on many fronts and particularly, selfishly maybe, for our own business community. So that's it.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Fletcher. Mr Derkatch, do you have a statement?

**SERGE DERKATCH:** I didn't prepare a specific statement. However, listening and talking to my colleagues here, I would just say ditto, because the same issues apply to the Drummoyne area. We represent in a very loose manner 90 businesses or 90 people who are conversant with our chamber. We're small. We're unique. We have no power. We talk with council. We have had conversations with council and Transport for NSW about this and we feel like there's—very difficult to make progress. The impact on the Drummoyne business, particularly Victoria Road and Lyons Road, as evidenced by the vacant premises that are there—I haven't counted them but if you walk up and down how difficult it is to lease them for that reason. The position of our chamber is: What can we do differently and how can we be smarter in how to try and fix this? In our submission that's what we've put forward. Parking is an issue and the parking has just been put back onto the backburner. There are many, many

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parking spots, public and private, that are just not being utilised because there's no system to manage them properly.

As common spaces are brought in by this Government—Formosa Street, Church Street—some 10, 15, 20, 30 car spots are removed. Again, car spots are removed from Victoria Road, which were there before, and you can't park there after 7.00 p.m. Businesses such as Harris Farm would benefit from the ability to park after 7.00 p.m. till three in the morning or six o'clock in the morning. Why, I don't know. There seems to be a lack of interest in doing that. To think innovatively about how we use that infrastructure with technology is probably where our interest is, because you have technology like Park'nPay. Do you start to think about social parking schemes? Do you talk about parking hubs? You've got Birkenhead shopping centre, with an unutilised car park for probably 50 per cent of the time during the week. We're not exploring that to get cars off the street so people can use public transport.

The bus lane was mentioned previously. Whoever decided to put the bus lane in the middle of Victoria Road in between Iron Cove Bridge and up to Lyons Road, it just doesn't make sense. The other impact of this is on our colleagues in Gladesville. Anyone who has to traverse the Gladesville Bridge used to be able to do it in 10-15 minutes. It takes them more than half an hour because the sequencing of the lights is pushing everything back beyond that. There's a huge impact on that stretch of road on many people, whilst right now Victoria Road is running quite freely today—maybe because it's school holidays, because that does make a difference. But as a cyclist using Victoria Road and crossing it, before the interchange there was always a stream of traffic moving on the Iron Cove Bridge. Now that stream of traffic has disappeared because it's all been pushed back. The sequencing of lights and how that is being used, it's changed dramatically. It's seemingly relieving congestion but I don't believe that's the case—we're just pushing it elsewhere.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Chapman, do you have a short opening statement too?

**MARK CHAPMAN:** Yes. Thanks, Madam Chair and honourable members of the Committee. My name's Mark Chapman. I've been the president of the Leichhardt-Annandale chamber for a period of nine years, and throughout the process of the early stages of WestConnex planning. I don't appear here today in objection to progress and improvements of infrastructure for our city and suburbs—that's one thing clear from our chamber—but I do appear today in solidarity with the business community and residents of our precincts that have been impacted by the process and now the outcomes of the Rozelle interchange and WestConnex project.

From a planning perspective, there was never a clear communication of the endgame or a big-picture plan provided for the precincts to show what the subsequent overall effects of the benefits would be in connection to the interchange in the system. Traffic proposals that were submitted at different stages for change to the surrounding arterial and local roads did not show a consideration for the businesses or the residential conditions in these areas. The timing of these works and proposed changes also seemed contradictory to what the tunnel network was going to deliver upon completion as originally planned. Whilst the communication and consultation took place, often the outcomes and responses were vague or deflected, with no further engagement or follow-up. There are still no clear indications of some of the proposed roadworks and changes or the timing of these works—or, in fact, if they're still being planned.

As I said, we're not opposed to change or progression that is going to benefit our communities. But the holistic planning, communication and delivery approach from the departments that are charged with delivering these projects is integral to allowing the realisation of these benefits for our communities. We hope the outcomes and the lessons learnt from this project will go a long way to improve future planning and delivery of significant infrastructure to benefit the communities as a whole. Thanks very much.

**The CHAIR:** Firstly, Ms Daly, you mentioned a survey of the businesses. You don't have to say yes to this, of course, but would the Committee be able to see that survey and the contents?

**BELINDA DALY:** Yes, we can submit that digitally.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. That would be extremely useful. I wanted to ask you all about the consultation, to begin with, and what you knew in terms of the impacts on your local streets. We've heard some people say that they were promised it would ease congestion. Was your chamber involved in the early stages and able to feed the views in, in terms of what the impact of WestConnex and the Rozelle interchange would be on your local communities? If so, do you think what has eventuated was what you were informed would be happening? I'll start with you, Mr Chapman.

**MARK CHAPMAN:** Madam Chair, some early consultation mostly came through the councils. Obviously there was a lot of pushback in regard to the projects as a whole, with the Stop WestConnex campaigns and those sorts of things. There was a collective approach from a lot of us in the business community that we welcomed improvements and upgrades to the transport and network system. But there was no clear engagement

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or direct engagement with us for our feedback on those initial design processes. It was only when proposals for the changes actually came through and were published for feedback that we then were able to engage. By that stage it was almost like the horse had bolted. The beast was moving and we didn't have any real, clear opportunity to provide constructive feedback, which we attempted to do. I met onsite, at the junction of Norton Street and City West Link, with a couple of representatives there and voiced my opinion in the way that, "Well, we can read regulations. We can look up"—

**The CHAIR:** They were representatives of?

**MARK CHAPMAN:** Of Transport for NSW. Those plans that were being pushed forward, we actually questioned in the sense of, "Why? Why do this now? Isn't the project supposed to be reducing traffic in these areas? Why do we need to do these holistic, drastic changes to these intersections if there's going to be less traffic? Could there be smaller measures put in place as testers to see if that would actually benefit, rather than going and spending another however many millions of dollars on ripping up another intersection"—which is quite a large intersection, that Norton Street-Darley Road and City West Link intersection. At the time, the submissions were one of the largest submissions against the project in the whole of the WestConnex life cycle.

It just shows that, at the time, people providing feedback were informed—we read up, we looked at regulations and what the benefits could be—and when we pushed back, it just disappeared for some reason. That's one of the ones we're talking about. We don't know if it's actually still going to be pushed forward with. But now, I guess, whether it's the knock-on effect of what's happened now is what they were trying to prepare for, but all that whole way through there was no clear indication or endgame—if that was the one thing or if it was just going to be street after street they were going to push forward with, and directing traffic into the local streets to get through that system.

**The CHAIR:** Do any other witnesses have any comments on the traffic being pushed into other roads and local roads? Was that made clear? Were you expecting that? Did it come as a surprise to everybody when the interchange opened, or was it made clear during the assessment process and during the community consultation process that that was going to be the impact?

**BELINDA DALY:** I think during the whole process of the construction we were told a different story of what the Rozelle interchange would actually bring, to point there was a plan for a beautification of Victoria Road because it could be a wonderful boulevard with no cars, beautiful trees, and you would even be able to park on Victoria Road. What happened when the Rozelle interchange opened was a surprise for all people, I think—residents, businesses, and people who travel to and from the area. It wasn't what we were promised throughout the whole construction period.

To be honest, we were all taken by surprise about the congestion and traffic that was experienced, especially in those first four weeks of opening. You could see cars and buses—which is public transport, which we're trying to encourage—blocked for three kilometres down the Balmain peninsula. Without a lie, personally I experienced crossing Victoria Road to drop my children to school and it was a one-hour trip to get back to the Lilyfield side of Darling Street. It was really something that we didn't expect and was not what was communicated to us through the whole construction period.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Fletcher, how are the businesses feeling in terms of whether there's going to be substantial change now over the next few years? Do they think that it's going to get better quickly, in terms of the—

**JONATHAN FLETCHER:** Are you asking that question around how businesses felt before this started or what?

**The CHAIR:** No, I'm thinking going forward now. We've heard, and you've said, that businesses are feeling severely impacted. There are less customers and parking is difficult. We've got your submission, which talks about even deliveries taking longer. Are businesses hopeful that things will change, or are they feeling a bit in despair that there are no solutions.

**JONATHAN FLETCHER:** I will answer that by saying: yes, in despair. I've spoken to a number of business owners about what's going on and what is happening. I can talk to some of the business owners a little bit more freely than the head of the chamber. People just go, "What can you do? What can we do? Nothing's going to happen." The other thing I'll say, again, as a general statement, is that before this project kicked off, I don't remember—I know I'm under oath, but I don't remember any consultative process with the local business owners. I can't say there wasn't one for sure but I don't remember one, and I don't remember discussions about what was about to happen. I'm speaking, again, on behalf of a number of different businesses, not mine. I'm speaking about the general community. There wasn't one.

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**The CHAIR:** Mr Derkatch, how was the consultation with the Drummoyne community?

**SERGE DERKATCH:** The Drummoyne community probably falls in a similar category. But I want to step back a bit further before even this happened. When the new bus lane—which was, I think, from Monday to Friday—was introduced, it was a complete surprise. Firstly to the council, because they had no concept—this is over Gladesville Bridge. It was a complete shock. In fact, we, as the chamber, facilitated a meeting with Transport for NSW at the council chambers because the then mayor, Angelo Tsirekas, was completely astounded that there was no warning of this. So that was one really big impact where that created gridlock for—and that was before the interchange happened. The chamber has worked or tried to communicate with and through council. So pretty much what Mayor Megna has said, but not directly. There was no direct contact from Transport for NSW with the chamber or other businesses. Maybe we're in a different category, maybe we're a different group, maybe we're a different chamber. But the short answer is no.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** I just wanted to pick up on that last point, if I may, on the engagement. Prior to the opening you said there was no engagement with the chamber. Has there been any since? Is there an opportunity to engage with Transport for NSW and convey these things and have that ongoing dialogue that there's some pretty serious tweaks that need to be made?

**SERGE DERKATCH:** There's always opportunity to engage with the chamber.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** No, I'm talking about Transport. What has occurred?

**SERGE DERKATCH:** Nothing. We've had no contact or discussion with Transport post this. But that actually doesn't really surprise me. We try and work with council because whatever impacts council impacts chamber impacts the community. So rather than have a conversation directly with a chamber, the chamber, the council and the residents together would be far more valuable to have than just talking to us directly because we would assemble maybe half a dozen businesses.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** The businesses that you represent would surely want that voice. You're trying to work constructively, I can see through the submission, with council, with residents to try to have solutions.

**SERGE DERKATCH:** We have some ideas we'd like to share and explore whether they're possible.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Can I just go to one of those and then I might ask you all to comment respectively.

**SERGE DERKATCH:** Sure.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Again, on revisiting the sequencing of the traffic lights, it seems that that's a common suggestion across local members and you've raised that also as something that might assist, particularly in your area at Lyons and Victoria Road, and Edwin and Victoria Road. You've called out, and I think it's been said that's also to get across the peninsula. Can you just elaborate on how that might help? Because it might be one of those constructive things that could be done fairly quickly that Transport might think, "You're not the expert. You're not a traffic person. We're the traffic people; we know best." But can you elaborate on how that might assist?

**SERGE DERKATCH:** I am a retired and very ailing engineer, way back when, in mechanical or to that effect. But if you think about what's available in today's world, let's go to artificial intelligence for a second. You think about all the surveillance and the measuring that happens right now. Like electricity, you can manage demand and distribute. Why can't some system—again, I've got no idea whether this is possible or not—measure, monitor and adjust? And maybe it already does. When you've got no traffic on Victoria Road, release the traffic on Lyons Road, release the traffic on Day Street to enter Victoria Road. When Victoria Road gets banked up, then change the sequencing of the traffic lights. It's purely a dream or a guess, but I would've thought with today's knowledge that's something that would be possible of investigation.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** It's a great suggestion. We saw some gaps on Victoria Road today that potentially could've benefitted from that responsive technology, as you say.

**SERGE DERKATCH:** Today Victoria Road was a dream, an absolute dream.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Yes, the day we go out it was a dream.

**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** It was absolutely incredible.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** It's school holidays. That's a good thing. If it is good and it's working, that's great. But there is a serious side to what you're saying. It's not just a luxury. It's also what you've mentioned, the increased risk of serious accidents as those who are frustrated sitting at those lights potentially run them, try



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to grab that last couple of seconds of yellow or try to push the boundaries a bit because they're frustrated. Can you speak to that and anything that you've, in your experience, seen or heard?

**SERGE DERKATCH:** Absolutely. Lyons Road and Victoria Road but travelling from east Drummoyne, when there is a green arrow to turn there, you're lucky to get two cars to turn and it banks up. Even today I was crossing Edwin Street and I actually did a little video, not getting across into the bulk of Drummoyne but the other way. There was a line of cars right up past Formosa Street trying to get on Victoria Road, and today was not a busy road on Victoria Road—maybe 20 or 30 cars. I actually videoed it just for the heck of it. It gets worse in peak times. Today is not a peak time.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Do others care to comment on the kind of options for sequencing, for safety, for constructive suggestions going forward?

**JONATHAN FLETCHER:** Maybe I'm getting my role confused a little bit here, but I wanted to put something on the table. In my past life I've worked on pretty big IT projects for a couple of the major banks, and some people may remember the core banking project at CBA. It was an enormous thing. It was talked about very publicly. Not to get into IT here because we're talking about roads, but when you're doing a very big project like that—you've got a core piece of infrastructure and you've got lots of other pieces of infrastructure. You've got traffic that will have to go backwards and forwards between some pieces, one way with others, different pieces of infrastructure that react in different ways to web traffic. And that project was incredibly complex, but it was 5 per cent of the value of the WestConnex project. When you're doing a road project—and, again, I'm not an engineer, like my friend here—but it is, I would imagine, not that difficult to test the implications of making major changes to road. It can't be that difficult. What I would like to maybe ask—and I don't know if I'm allowed to do this, so excuse me—but how did we test what was going to happen?

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** Do any of you wish to comment further on those suggestions—traffic light sequencing?

**SERGE DERKATCH:** The only comment I'd make is there seems to be activity now with cameras, there seems to be an attempt to tweak and it seems to be getting better, so let's put that into perspective. But when it's at its breaking point is when it completely collapses, and that's what we're talking about. The breaking point happens either in weather or in an emergency or something. The other point is, emergency vehicles trying to get out or into Drummoyne, wherever that happens, is a real concern to many people.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** We've heard that also and the point is that we can um and ah over what happens and learn lessons but equally it's vitally important to your communities and businesses that we try to find solutions to this and a way to move forward. If I'm hearing what you're saying, you don't want us to get to having that accident or having that tragedy to have to spur the changes.

**SERGE DERKATCH:** Correct, absolutely.

**The Hon. NATALIE WARD:** While there are traffic experts and there's lots of monitoring—we saw lots of cameras this morning and it was interesting—it would be fantastic for the kids to not have to go back to school; we'll just keep school holidays going because it's better for traffic. Ultimately, we do have to find solutions and perhaps that monitoring is one of the ways we could do that and adjustments. I'm hearing that from all of you pretty clearly. And revisiting some of those tweaks around traffic lights or some of those roads that necessarily—just because drivers may take time to get used to things, it's not acceptable as it presently is to continue. Is that a fair assessment in each of your experiences?

**SERGE DERKATCH:** I think that's very fair.

**BELINDA DALY:** Just one thing on the sequencing: There are only three roads out of the Balmain peninsula, as we all know, and Darling Street is probably the critical one in terms of trade and businesses on that high street. It is a well-known street of shops, restaurants, 19 heritage pubs. The sequencing going in and out of Darling Street on both sides currently only allows two to three cars. You can see the queueing. That's probably because they want more cars to flow freely down Victoria Road. But the adverse effect that has is people just see that and don't want to come to our area.

We've had businesses say that people are changing their appointment times. They're going to a Pilates class later in the day to avoid traffic. They're changing behaviours. What we fear as a chamber of commerce with so many businesses in our area is that that change of behaviour converts to changes of behaviour to trade outside our area because it just gets too hard. People are smart. They've got access to so many options. They may choose to go elsewhere for their services, their goods, their shopping. The long-term effects of that are really what we're afraid of.

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**The CHAIR:** Can I check with the other chambers of commerce? With that same question, do you have any response to that?

**MARK CHAPMAN:** Yes, in some ways. It's different to the peninsula. Obviously it is a very unique situation as far as the Balmain peninsula goes. But as far as where Leichhardt is, there is that congestion being caused in regards to the traffic for delivery times. Businesses that require deliveries at certain times of the morning to be able to open for their day's trade are now being pushed back. I've seen that, and the congestion that's causing, where deliveries are coming in later just so they can stay out of the traffic, effectively—or they just can't get there. That's that knock-on effect as well.

There's also the pinch point that the interchange has caused. It is now shifting traffic to Parramatta Road. We're sort of being bookended by absolute congestion. No matter which way you go now, at certain times of the day there is absolute congestion on both sides. We're almost being turned into an island in some ways that people don't want to come and try to get in or out of. As Belinda was saying, people are now choosing to say, "Well, let's just stay out of there because it's just too hard." There are those effects that are being seen and coming through. There's no hard data on that, but business owners know their customers.

There was COVID for a period of time. We've recovered from that. It's something we've all pushed through and come out the backside of. But to now cop these changes and these congestion issues that are now causing further knock-on effects—it's just like, "When are we going to get a breath to try and rebuild?" There's all this talk about the inner west and trying to reinvigorate your Norton streets and your high streets of the inner west, and all those sorts of things that are the big hot topics that everyone is willing to talk about and everyone wants to get onboard with, but it just seems like we get a couple of steps forward and then get drawn back because of the issues that keep coming up in the surrounding areas.

Yes, I agree in regards to those knock-on effects for the businesses. What the solutions are—well, we've got to work through those. That's where I hope that we can see, whether it's tweaks of traffic conditions or—I don't know what the answers are, and we're not here to provide those answers. But I guess, from the feedback point of view, how do we assist in that point that it doesn't happen again, because of these knock-on effects? These projects that happen should be beneficial. We should be the beneficiaries of these infrastructure upgrades and the works that are being done, and how that can increase local business, local amenities, the schools, the safety for pedestrians and those sorts of things.

**JONATHAN FLETCHER:** Can I just add, echoing what Mark said there—but 70,000 cars go down Victoria Road every day, roughly. I'm going to go back to the web traffic example. Apologies for doing this, but it simplifies it in my mind. When you make changes to an artery like that, it's not difficult to map out what the possibilities are and what might happen. I'm not pointing fingers at anybody; it was just something that maybe wasn't done in the right priority somewhere. I think I can speak for a lot of business owners. It would be amazing to sit down and have a look before something was going to happen, and say, "Oh, this is going to go here. All this traffic is going to go there. Wow. Right. Okay. I get it." It's great that the roads are going in—and, by the way, I live in the Southern Highlands. That M8 for me is a godsend. I'm not against progress and new roads going in. Mark and I had a chat about this today. But I think when you do any major project or any big change involving millions of people, people need to feel involved.

**The CHAIR:** So when you're saying for people to just say, "This road's going in. This is what it's going to do," are you saying that the designers or whoever thought up this project didn't do that in the first place, or that they didn't consult with the community about it?

**JONATHAN FLETCHER:** I don't know the answer to that.

**The CHAIR:** That's pretty extraordinary, isn't it? I put it to you that we have very highly paid executives at Transurban and within Transport for NSW. I assume that a bunch of very highly paid executives were poring over this. Surely they knew what was going to happen. Are you suggesting, Mr Fletcher, maybe they didn't actually know? Or they didn't do their homework? Or they did know?

**SERGE DERKATCH:** May I ask, but did they speak to the right people? Because I'm sure they did consultation. I'm sure they had meetings with various parties. Being on their side of the fence, they've got to find the right people, who may be the ones sitting here today or whatever, because talking to the right people—when you go to the front line, the front line gives you the best answer. The only comment I also reiterate, it's a sleeping—actually, I don't know that much about it. What's the story with the Western Harbour Tunnel? What impact will it have? What lessons could be learnt? Because, to be honest, I have no idea where it comes out, what it does, and will it make—I believe it was supposed to be finished. It's underground: out of sight, out of mind. Is it going to improve or is it not going to improve the impact on this interchange? I actually do not know. I think, if I surveyed

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our chamber, no-one would know, because it's either too complicated or it's just out of sight, out of mind until it happens.

**The CHAIR:** Given their track record, I don't think Transurban knows and I don't think Transport for NSW has any idea what the impact will be.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** In the earlier session I asked about the predictive models that were used to underpin the project. The model that has been used by Transport for NSW is predict and provide. It's clear that the predictions haven't been particularly accurate. The alternative is the idea of vision and validate. From the explanation that was provided by the Inner West Council, that starts with asking, "What do we want our communities to look like?" I thought I'd give you the opportunity to say, in light of the circumstances, what your vision is about how things should be in your communities that might then be reflected in the adjustments being made to try to rectify some of the issues that have been generated by poor prediction.

**SERGE DERKATCH:** May I answer that? I've thought about that and we've talked about that a fair bit. An example of that is Lane Cove Council—and in North Sydney to a lesser extent—where they had some public space, which was a car park. It was a horrible car park in the midst of a centre. They constructed a community commercial and parking hub using technology where it is an amazing place to go to: easy to park, easy to access, different levels of parking. If you stay there for a long time, you pay. There are community areas. In places like Drummoyne—and councils have wanted to do this—there are areas that could be turned into that, where it's the community business taking the demand off Victoria Road and putting it back into other areas. We've got to start thinking along those terms. I know there have been master plans done backwards and forwards, but this is now bringing it to the forefront.

If you've created these community hubs, it creates a good place for business. People will come and have coffees there. People will come and bring their children there. People have community meetings there. Lane Cove Council has done an exceptional job of doing that. I was there yesterday and it is fantastic. That's the vision that I can see for Drummoyne—from the top of Lyons Road to the back of Formosa Street, and potentially reaching into Five Dock with the new metro station as well. I think council has started to consider those things. That's partly my personal vision, but it would represent many of the businesses in my area.

**MARK CHAPMAN:** Can I also add, on the Lane Cove aspect—I remember some of the early conversations I had with council, or some of the groups that were lobbying against WestConnex. I actually used Lane Cove Tunnel as an example of how they did it quite well, where the tunnel went in, and one of the first things they did, at the top of Longueville Road there: the transport hub, the bus stops, the bus lanes. It was so easy for residents to walk straight up to Epping Road, get on a bus and get into town. It was actually quicker to get on a bus and get into town from that point. All the traffic went underground. Yes, there was pushback and people didn't want to pay tolls, but once they realised—which people are doing. I know the realisation of the M4 tunnel, for my work that I need to do, has changed my days and my planning.

But the Lane Cove Tunnel and that transport infrastructure that was put in on Epping Road changed the game for that lower North Shore area because people were able to get into town a lot easier. There's no trains there—obviously buses are a big thing. But the surprise, I think, for many—and the bus lanes have come up—is how ineffective the bus lanes are coming out of our areas now, where there isn't the dedicated bus lane, and why buses are being made to merge with traffic to get onto the Anzac Bridge. Why aren't those bus lanes dedicated, as they are from the Lane Cove Tunnel and the M2, where they just had a clear run and people were happy to get on the bus? They went, "Great, I don't have to drive anymore. I've got a very easy way to get into town now." Whereas now people are not going on the bus because (a) you can't get on one because they're too full and (b) you're probably sitting on a bus longer than you are in a car because of all the stops you've got to go through, plus you've got to merge in with all the traffic congestion there.

I think there are things like that where a lot of the feedback that we're getting, that I'm hearing, is that there just aren't any real aspects of it that make a lot of sense, in terms of the merging of all the lanes into two and coming out. There's all this dedication to the tunnels coming out, but the actual traffic that is really coming in—I mean, quite frankly, it was easier to get through the Rozelle Bay area during the construction than it is now. And all that traffic that was above ground that is now going through tunnels—it was all still there, but it was 20 minutes less to get into the city when all that traffic was above ground. The traffic hasn't reduced. It's now split, but it's harder to get into town. We're not experts, but anyone can see the picture of it. How does that make sense, in many ways?

**JONATHAN FLETCHER:** Yes.

**MARK CHAPMAN:** I think that's where the modelling aspect comes into play, and the questions around the modelling, and what was really done and dug into. When you take 80,000 cars, you might put 40,000

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into a tunnel, but the other 40,000 are still sitting somewhere. The 80,000 were all together before; now you're splitting and it's harder to get moving. Really stripping it down to the basics of it: Where did it go wrong and how was that planning process undertaken to get to that point? That's where the dispersal of vehicles and of people—people trying to change habits from something that wasn't actually that bad before. We were promised the dream and now we're actually in a worse position than what we were in beforehand. I think that's where the confusion, I guess, is from the local residents and businesses. How did we end up in a worse spot than what we had before?

**The CHAIR:** "Confusion" is putting it mildly, I think, Mr Chapman, in terms of how the businesses feel.

**MARK CHAPMAN:** Oh, anger, confusion—absolutely mildly. I can't repeat the language being used in many instances. To put it quite frankly, it doesn't pass the pub test. That's where everyone always uses that slang term. Does it pass the pub test? Well, quite frankly, it just hasn't. That would be the everyday person voicing their opinion about it. Did it pass the pub test? Well, sure—in theory. But now it just doesn't.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Fletcher, you wanted to jump in?

**JONATHAN FLETCHER:** As you probably can tell by my accent, a lot of my compatriots have had a big role in building and designing and a lot of the work that has happened on roads in Australia for a long time, not just with WestConnex. Just on what Mark was saying there, I called up one of my friends and I said—and I won't use the expletives, because Irish people tend to do that quite a lot. I called him up and said, "How on earth can something like that happen? Like, honestly, just explain it to me." Again, I'm certainly not here to point any fingers. This person has worked on projects all over the world. He said, "Look, things like this can happen when there's a small design change. A tunnel needs to get moved 10 metres that way in one part of a suburb, which causes a 60-metre move in another suburb, which determines something quite profound with where something is going to pop out, which can all of a sudden kibosh a plan around certain traffic flows and pinch points."

When you're doing a project as enormous as WestConnex was, or is, these kinds of things can happen. Again, going back to what Mark said, I'm not an engineer. I don't understand traffic flows. But—I almost mentioned his name—this fellow said to me, "Yes, these things can happen." It's going back to my point early on that if you model 80,000 cars, you're going to put some of them here, some of them there, some of them down here, different times of the day, week, month, school holidays, daylight savings, all these kinds of things—it is not difficult to do. It's not difficult. Why did we not at least know—have some contingencies to say, "If we move that here, this could happen there and this could happen there." And we would be able to sit down with business owners, chambers, residents—whoever it is, politics aside for a minute—and sort of say, "This is what we're looking at here. These are all the moving parts of this."

I'm saying now, whether it's the fact Australia's never done something this big before or not, I don't know, but I think we took on such an enormous beast of a project and just probably, collectively, didn't realise some of the impacts. We just didn't realise it. Again, hopefully we can sort of hand on heart and say, "You know what, this is actually what's happened here." And whether this forum needs to find out who, and where, and all that kind of stuff—it's happened. What we're saying is we're not in here—we're all quite seasoned business leaders in here, and we're all in here representing the fact that there are serious issues for lots of businesses. I'm echoing that and I'm saying we could have predicted a lot of this.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I think Ms Daly wants to say something as well.

**BELINDA DALY:** I think one of the big things about high-street trading—it is difficult, regardless. Running a small business is not an easy task. We have got economic issues as well. But when you overlay this with what has happened over the last—let's call it four months but, really, four years of long-term construction—

**JONATHAN FLETCHER:** Five.

**BELINDA DALY:** Five—these businesses are really suffering on all levels, and you can see that. Look, we don't have the hard data, but you can see on the high street the empty shops, the changing of trading, shops closing down, restaurants not making it. That's why we're here today. We're volunteers in this process. We are representing a whole bunch of businesses that can't all be here but really have been affected by their access taken away from getting to their businesses.

**The CHAIR:** You're talking about businesses suffering. You've both used that language today. Not all businesses are suffering. Transurban is a business; Transurban is a very big business and it's not suffering, is it? That is a genuine statement. In terms of your response to that, it does sound like a lot of businesses have been sacrificed. Transurban is making a hell of a lot of money out of that. How do you all feel as businesspeople when you know that that is probably what is happening?

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**MARK CHAPMAN:** I mean, business is what makes the world go around. We understand there's all levels and scales of business and we're not here to talk about any particular business. You've mentioned who you've mentioned. But I think the whole process and what our voice is wanting to get across is that every business is as important as the other, whether it is the larger scale business or whether it is the small, mother-and-father business on the corner shop. I think every business in the country contributes to the economy and, whatever scale that is, everyone pays their taxes, does the right thing. We're all forced to comply and do the right thing as far as planning process goes, as far as due diligence goes. When we enter into agreements, when we sign on the dotted line of contracts, whatever that might be, we're expected to do the right thing. If we don't, then we get hauled over the coals by whatever authorities, agencies or whatever it might be that we're reportable to.

That's the crux of it, that from the small business perspective we just want to make sure that every small business is treated the same as every other business—we're not just forgotten and pushed aside to ensure that something keeps moving. Like I said, no business is against progress, no business is against moving forward—because that's what we have to do. We have to progress, we have to grow, we have to move forward, but we want to make sure that what we're being held account to, everyone is being held account to. That's what it comes down to: The decisions we have to make, we're accountable for; so, whatever level of business, whatever decision is made, that people are being held accountable, no matter what level you're sitting at it. That's to simplify it, mainly.

As Fletcher was saying, we're not here to point fingers. We're not here to cry foul or try to put someone in the noose. We're just here to ensure that the same mistakes aren't made moving forward. As businesses and as people, and as history tells, there are always people who have to suffer to get gain, to move forward. We understand that. There's always sacrifice that someone has to make for progress, for advancement—whatever that might be. It's happened forever. But we want to make sure that the lessons learnt and the mistakes that have been made don't reoccur in the departments, in the parties or whoever it might be that has to roll these projects out and deliver these projects for the communities, and that everyone is held to the same account. I think that's, collectively—

**JONATHAN FLETCHER:** Very well said.

**MARK CHAPMAN:** I think that's probably the main way to look at it. We can't do much about this thing now, but we can help maybe widen the eyes of those who were making decisions as to what the process can be for the next time it comes around. If we're the ones who have to suffer a little bit of pain in our community now to make it better for the people down the track, our kids and everyone else ahead—we all do this for our kids, our families and all those who will benefit from it—we want to make sure that voice is being heard so people aren't sitting here again in 20 years, talking about the same mistakes.

**SERGE DERKATCH:** You're asking a very complex question and scenario to deal with. If you didn't have the Transurbans, the Lendleases, the Mirvac and all of those, you wouldn't have this infrastructure in the first place. I'm not here to defend them. If you didn't have the Transport for NSW, you wouldn't have this. If you didn't have the Government behind it and the economic environment, you wouldn't have this. The issue here is people, and how people interact and work together on very complex things. That's what feels like it is broken here. You're completely not going to get it right. The agendas of each of those four or five different groups are very different. Transurban is trying to deliver value to their shareholders. Transport for NSW are trying to deliver value to the Government, and so on and so forth. The small businesses just want to survive, make money and feed their families. They're very conflicting and different agendas. Councils also have a different agenda. You're not going to solve that easily.

However, maybe a bigger, higher level process comes back to what is the combined vision, where you can get those people before you get terribly into the construction stage. Because you make your money in design; you lose it in construction. If you spend the time in the design, moving a line on a piece of paper is much cheaper than moving a wall after you've built it. I'm a retired, use-by project manager, or whatever, and those principles of how projects are set up at the very beginning—and I'm not here to criticise, because I don't actually know—can make a big difference on something like this. It's the conflicting agendas, the contractual arrangements, who's got the better skills to negotiate. Transurban employs and pays top dollar for people to negotiate on their behalf; Transport for NSW, and so on and so forth. It's the skills of those people that push the agendas or drive the outcomes and, possibly, that's what's happened here as well.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Derkatch, I wanted to ask about the issue around Lyons Road and Victoria Road. Do you think there's an argument around creating some kind of mechanism where the various stakeholders—it seems like there's not sufficient communication between Transport, the council and local businesses. Do we need to create some kind of mechanism? In your proposal you have a suggestion around a property on the corner of Lyons Road and Victoria Road. That requires a whole lot of players to all work together,

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and maybe that's a model that needs to be looked at in terms of how we customise place-based solutions to the kind of problems that have emerged.

**SERGE DERKATCH:** Sure, it's worth a try. We could assemble, I don't know, half a dozen businesses on that intersection. There's a fire station there as well. There's a chemist and a real estate agent. If you bring the right people from Transport who can—and we've had attempts to do that. We've talked about things in the past. But if you haven't got the right people who make decisions from Transport to make the change, whether it's the sequencing in the lights, it's a useless exercise. The forum to do that can be done. That's not hard. It's the ideas et cetera and then the execution of those ideas is where it usually falls apart.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** One of the issues with that intersection is that buses terminate at Wrights Road so they have to cross Victoria Road.

**SERGE DERKATCH:** They do, sure.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Whether some modification might reduce a bit of pressure on that intersection—

**SERGE DERKATCH:** Sure, it's possible. These are the discussions you have to have, then the experts have got to test and model them, and then implement them. You're familiar with that intersection, as am I. They've got to go and do a loop—we're talking about roads that only just fit a bus.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Yes, they're tiny.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much for coming along today. Hopefully the Committee can determine a bit more in terms of accountability. Mr Chapman, they were very eloquent words towards the end there. We'll be in touch if you took anything on notice, which I don't think you did, or if we have any further questions for you.

**BELINDA DALY:** Thank you for the opportunity.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**

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**Ms ANNABELLE BERRIMAN**, President, Parents and Citizens' Association, Rozelle Public School, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** Welcome back to the afternoon session of today's hearing. Ms Berriman, do you have a short opening statement to make for the Committee?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Yes, I do. I would like to thank the Chair, Ms Cate Faehrmann, and the honourable members of this Committee for inviting Rozelle Public School P&C to provide feedback, thoughts and opinions on the impacts of the Rozelle interchange on Rozelle Public School students, their families and wider communities. There are four key topics that I'd like to cover briefly and they are the safety of our children on the roads and the air quality, traffic congestion for above-ground vehicles, the impact of the Rozelle interchange on the lives and families of the Rozelle Public School, and the discovery and clean-up of asbestos in Rozelle Parklands.

The safety of our children in the community is now compromised. Two significant ways this is occurring every day are the gridlocked traffic congestion that makes walking to school a type of *Squid Game* activity when attempting to cross the road and the unfiltered air stacks emitting potentially deadly gases into the atmosphere and into the growing lungs of our children. Pedestrian safety is an essential right for all members of our community, and this is currently not the case. The community wants to know why the stacks aren't filtered. Is the cost of human lives too low compared to the cost of electricity? I believe that similar types of stacks are required by law to be filtered in parts of Europe. It is curious to our community why the laws overseas do not apply here to protect us. Many years from now we may learn the true cost of not filtering these stacks.

There are numerous factors in the unmanageable traffic congestion, including the offset bus lane, numerous lanes merging into one lane, priority for toll-paying traffic and timed lights for above-ground vehicles. The impact of the Rozelle interchange on our community is one without significant positives. The discovery and clean-up of asbestos in Rozelle Parklands took a sharp-eyed Rozelle parent to notice the asbestos contamination and alert authorities. This is symbolic of our issues with the Rozelle interchange. In summary, the traffic is bad, the air quality is threatening, the soil is contaminated, and businesses are struggling as a direct result of the Rozelle interchange. We suggest the following if you are contractually obliged to keep the WestConnex open. One, filter all of the stacks; two, move the offset bus lane back to the kerbside lane; and three, install a red-light camera at the intersection of Darling Street and Victoria Road. Thank you for your indulgence.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much again for appearing today. You talked about the red-light camera between Darling Street and Victoria Road. Is that because of what you and the members of the school—the parents—are witnessing during drop-off? Is that why you are calling for that?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Yes, absolutely. I have a couple of quotes here that I can read about that that relate directly to it. One quote is, "The traffic in the mornings is sometimes so bad that it is hard to walk children to school. You need to weave around the cars blocking the crossings as they try to make their way onto and down Victoria Road. This is because there are too many lanes merging into one." May I read another statement?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** "The intersection of Darling Street and Victoria Road became dangerous for pedestrians when the interchange opened as confused and frustrated motorists blocked the crossings at the traffic lights and some continued to drive through them during the walk signal."

**The CHAIR:** So parents have witnessed behaviour that you think was not evident before the Rozelle interchange. Could you talk about the difference, if there has been one, at that intersection?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Absolutely. There are concerns, and I can even reference some people who had older children who used to walk to school unaccompanied before, crossing the road, who now walk them to school because, as mentioned in those statements, there's traffic that continues to either go through the walk lanes during the walk signal or blocks them. Kids and other community members have to weave through traffic, so it's dangerous, and that has become apparent only after the interchange has opened.

**The CHAIR:** Are rat runs impacting you in Rozelle—people trying to avoid the areas that are more heavily impacted? Is that the situation?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** There are a couple of streets that you can go along and turn at that time illegally and get onto Victoria Road. I have noticed myself, and many other community members, that that happens. However, it's dangerous to also do that, because then you're turning onto the lane where the buses stop and then the dedicated bus lane, because, as you know, two lanes now are pretty much dedicated to buses. So

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there are other vehicles—peninsula traffic—coming along that way as well to avoid the congestion of trying to get on through the proper channels during the peak hours.

**The CHAIR:** What stories have you heard about the impact that it's had in terms of time—in terms of kids' drop-off and pick-up? Has that also been a factor? I'm assuming drop-off is worse.

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** There are significant impacts, and drop-off is worse because most people are trying to commute to work at a similar time. I have stories from my community where they used to walk their kids to school and drive them when it was raining, and now the time is the same whether it's walking or driving, because it takes so long. Also the traffic lights are so bad that they feel dangerous crossing the road a lot of the time. But many other members have mentioned that commute times have doubled or more than doubled, so they are just trying to avoid having to do it all or they work from home more frequently.

**The CHAIR:** Are you in a position to comment about the lack of pedestrian infrastructure now on Victoria Road—I know we've got the active transport and bike people coming next. In terms of pedestrians crossing, we heard from the member for Balmain earlier today, who has heard about people crossing between where Victoria Road meets Roberts Street right at the end near Anzac Bridge—700 metres—having to get from one side to the other. Have you heard about those impacts on that stretch of Victoria Road? I'm assuming that some of the lights where pedestrians were able to cross aren't there any more for starters. Is that correct?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** I can't comment on the one right near Victoria Road. I do believe that there used to be a crossing that isn't a crossing any more. However, I have seen people running across the road, because that's a frustration point as well. What I can tell you is that there is so much traffic now that was never there before, and what the community believes they were promised has not been delivered. As I mentioned before, there are no significant positive impacts from the Rozelle interchange opening. There seem to be quite numerable negative impacts, including that safety of our pedestrians, which is why we're asking for the red-light camera at Victoria Road, to discourage motorists from continuing to cross that intersection and to provide safe passage for the kids.

**The CHAIR:** From your perspective, whether you were involved in the earlier stages of the Rozelle interchange—approvals process, design phase and consultation phase—what was the community promised?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** This is from community feedback rather than direct involvement but, at that time, we were promised an enhancement, if anything, to our community. It would be that there would be less traffic above ground or most traffic would be pushed underneath. It would be great if we would be able to get some numbers on what is the above-ground traffic now and what are the traffic numbers below ground in the tunnels. Has that been delivered as promised or is there an overall increase in the number of vehicular traffic and, therefore, what is it percentage wise. At the moment, even looking without numbered data, it looks significantly more congested than ever before above ground, yet the tunnel traffic seems to be free-flowing.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Thank you so much for coming in and for representing the school community. I must confess, I'm not a local to the area so I'm trying to get my head around it, and looking at the maps and what not. In terms of the students at your school and where they are drawn from, can you explain a bit—it would just be helpful for me if you could contextualise a bit where parents and students are coming from.

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Absolutely. Rozelle Public School, as you may be aware, sits just slightly offset from Victoria Road and faces Darling Street, which is a high street, if you like. The school catchment is on that peninsula side and extends to the other side of Victoria Road also. We have many, many, many students that have to cross that road—that have to cross Victoria Road, let me be very clear—to get onto the other side and therefore access the school each day.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** That's helpful. Again, I'm just trying to go off a map. What surrounds the public school?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Mostly retail shops and there's a little bit of—I don't want to say industrial but I think it's industrial zoned at the back, where there is a car service place and a storage facility. Otherwise, it's predominantly residential houses and then the high street full of retail shops.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** That's just contextual for my understanding.

**The CHAIR:** In terms of Victoria Road, there has been a lot of promise. I think that was part of the attraction for the local community to begin with, wasn't it? I think we heard today that it would be this incredible boulevard for pedestrians and cyclists—

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** With trees.



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**The CHAIR:** And trees, yes. That would have been incredible. Hopefully, it will still happen. I'm interested to know what you know about that. But I wasn't aware of students needing to cross Victoria Road. That's very significant. Firstly, how much is that impacting you and how important is it that that "boulevardification" of Victoria Road occurs?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** At the moment, the boulevard is the furthest thing from my mind. We're not really interested right at this moment in trees and a beautiful dual carriageway each way because the one that's there right now isn't working and that's where the problem is. The congestion is ridiculous. So many people in our community have chosen to live in a small house—to be close to the city to be able to commute to work. That was the attraction for them to the area. Some of the comments we've received back from the community is that it's now faster to get into the city from West Ryde than it is from Rozelle. There are significant differences in distance and house prices, if you like, as well. But it's just impacting that commute so much, which is the daily life of people in my community.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** At Rozelle Public School, is there a rear access that enables drop-off and pick-up at the school?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** There is a car park that you can access from Darling Street or, if you come up Wellington Street, it's a one-way street. I think the name of that street might be Merton Street. Then it goes into a little car park area where you can drop off at the side, but you have to still be able to get there from Darling Street or Wellington. As far as the rest of Wellington Street goes, there is a bus stop right outside the back of the school there and it's not a safe place to drop off children. After the bus stop, it's no stopping and that's where the Bridge Hotel is that goes onto the corner of Wellington Street and Victoria Road.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** You say it's difficult to get access to the school for drop-off purposes. Where is the bank-up of traffic? Is it along Darling Street? Is that the issue?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Absolutely. There is traffic along Darling Street. At the moment, along the whole of the Balmain-Rozelle peninsula, you can go down to the London pub, which is getting towards east Balmain, and sit in traffic from around 7.15 a.m. for 25 minutes just to try and get up the other end of Darling Street, if that's where you are headed. It's banked up and then you obviously have cars turning on from the side streets trying to get onto Darling Street to get anywhere near the school to drop their kids off. It's incredibly heavily congested because most of them are trying to either get onto Victoria Road and go into the city, or they're coming in the other direction along Darling Street and trying to get across Victoria Road to drop off their children. It's just congested in all directions.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is there much queueing across the intersection, so on Victoria Road cars ending up in the middle of the intersection because they're trying to get across and then that creating a blockage north and south along Darling Street?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** I think cars tend to leave just enough room for the cars going across Darling Street one side and the other, but it's the pedestrian crossings that they're blocking in order to do that. If you like, there is a square and this way is Darling Street. The cars can still get across but the cars coming along Victoria Road will come and just leave enough room for Darling Street to go through but then they're sitting right where our students and communities are trying to cross the road from one side of Victoria Road to the other.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** For those who are dropping off, is their only option to then head back onto Darling Street to get back onto Victoria Road or is there another way they can get back onto Victoria Road?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** If you are on Darling Street and you go into the school car park—that's not the school's but the community car park—that's a one-way street so you have to come back out to Darling and then either turn and go right along Darling to Victoria Road or go left and go down another one-way street, which is Nelson, and then onto Wellington Street, and from Wellington you can either go right or left onto Victoria Road. When you're on Wellington and you take a right, there is an unfiltered huge air stack right there. I'll take this moment to point out that it's much lower ground level than where the school is. I believe the community was told that they would both be at ground level. However, when we look at it on a geographical map, the school is much higher than the base of the air stack. We believe we are getting a lot of air from that as well.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So if the wind is blowing in a particular direction, it may blow the emissions towards the school?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Yes. The P&C have been paying for air quality monitoring onsite for some years now.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What's that uncovered?

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**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** It's uncovered that we get alarms quite often. That blow of air into the school is not of good quality; it is below the quality standards. However, there's nothing we can do about it when those alarms are received, other than know that that's what's happening. We don't have sealed classrooms so everything that's inside is, effectively, outside to some extent. Also, we have no recourse or plan of action in what to do about it because, as I mentioned previously, the stacks are unfiltered. We would really like them to be filtered.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Coming back to the question about children crossing Victoria Road, ultimately, what's the solution, do you think?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** How long is a piece of string? I think there are so many options here about crossing Victoria Road. An immediate one that could be implemented is that red light speed camera to dissuade motorists from continuing across the crossings when the red light is there. This red light camera has been promised to our community twice in the past two years, and we even received word that it would be in by last July. It is still not there.

**The CHAIR:** Who was it promised by?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** I'd have to get back to you on that one. I'll take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** If you could.

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Yes, I will.

**The CHAIR:** We can get back to you in terms of the detail of that.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Beyond the red light camera, what else can be done?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Let's move the bus lane back to where it belongs, right next to the curb, to create more room for traffic so that there's less need for that kind of trying to squeeze in and really—I know what it's like to be a motorist as well. You want to be able to get where you're going. It's very frustrating being in that decision, having two lanes essentially for the bus, two lanes for traffic, some of which then split and can go right and then two go onto Anzac Bridge, but then they merge again with the bus lane. So three lanes then effectively move into one. Then when they get onto Anzac, they merge again with the lane that's already there. So it just creates this huge blockage and it banks up. It doesn't just affect our community; it also goes all the way back to Drummoyne and Gladesville.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** The council has suggested that one of the solutions is enhanced public transport and encouraging people to change transport modes from cars to public transport or active transport. Is that something you think would be amenable for parents with kids that they have to drop off at school?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Public transport is always something that can be improved. However, I can't speak for how everyone in our community's lives work and whether or not public transport feeds into where they need to be going that day. If they've got to pick their kids up with sporting equipment and go to activities after school, that's not always something that can occur with access via public transport. I think the best way is to provide—the public transport, I think, is working reasonably well as it is. However, there's not enough room for the motorists. You know that saying from years ago, "The road is there to share"? It doesn't really feel like that's happening at the moment. It feels like it's prioritised for toll-paying motorists and it's also prioritising two entire lanes for public transport.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Can I ask a follow-up about buses? That's the public transport option we were just talking about to get largely to the city—the commuter one. Is there a bus option for kids to get to school in the local area, because we're talking about parental drop-offs? Is there a bus service, essentially, and has that been affected?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** There's not a dedicated school bus. However, we are a primary school, so a lot of parents don't feel comfortable with letting younger children catch a public bus to school at this age. I know that I'm not with children.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** It's a problem for the morning, not in the afternoon?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** It's a problem all the time. However, it's much more noticeable in the morning. The afternoon—it depends what day it is. I can tell you very easily that Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday are very popular with people going into the city, and Thursday and Friday, not as much.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I wanted to ask about bus services. We know that there's been a lot of impact in relation to bus services in the areas around the Rozelle interchange. With kids trying to get to school, has there

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been an impact in relation to the way that the kids have had to arrive in the morning and plan their day? Has it had an impact on families trying to get kids to school?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** I do have some feedback in regards to parents who are commuting via bus to school and who walk their children to school. Their bus commute time has also increased because, as I mentioned, there are so many lanes—essentially four lanes, two of them for the bus, merging with the other two lanes of traffic and then merging again as they go onto Anzac Bridge. Even though public transport has been prioritised for a portion of Victoria Road travel, it's then heavily impacting the rest of commuter traffic as soon as it goes onto Anzac Bridge. So that affects the lives of those people in our community commuting to work and back.

**The CHAIR:** I've also got a question about the walkability and cycleability of the area. As you were saying, around Rozelle Public School there are smaller houses and the streets are very walkable. It could go either way, actually. It could impact on the safety of people cycling but it could potentially also force more families to maybe walk their kids to school because the traffic has been so bad. Have you seen any impact on any of that? Would you care to comment?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** I can't comment on cyclists. We don't have dedicated cycle lanes, as Victoria Road does, so I can't really comment on that one. I'm not a cyclist myself and haven't had any direct feedback from the community. As far as walking to school, it really depends on what the situation of each individual household is. Those who can work from home on those days, I believe they are walking their children to school more often. However, in times of inclement weather, such as yesterday, it's desired. A lot of them want to pick their kids up and be able to do so freely and easily at those times, and they're impacted very much by the traffic conditions. Being a very close-knit, small community, the vast majority of people walk their kids to school anyway, if they can.

**The CHAIR:** We heard from members of the local business chambers as witnesses beforehand who were telling us about the impact that the interchange and now the congested traffic has had on businesses. Do you think that's the case for the suburb all round? They were saying it's almost like being rebranded. There's this reputational damage. I don't want to say that. I was almost afraid to put that into words, but that's what they're submitting. Have you heard any feedback about that in terms of being a Rozelle resident?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Absolutely. Prior to coming here today—just for your information—we put a call-out to the community to receive feedback. There definitely have been comments from local business owners, because we have many of them in our school community as well. The comments are along the lines of—and this is a summary of their comments—that there's less foot traffic now. The high congestion of cars and peak-hour traffic has resulted in fewer visitors to our area, and therefore reduced retail sales, and our local businesses are struggling. That's a summary of what we've been told.

**The CHAIR:** I was wondering also whether you wouldn't mind tabling that survey and that feedback so we also have a copy of all of the feedback. Would that be okay, do you think?

**ANNABELLE BERRIMAN:** Let me double-check with everyone who submitted first and then I would be happy to, as long as they are okay.

**The CHAIR:** Great. Thank you so much for appearing today. The secretariat will be in touch with you with anything you've taken on notice, such as that. Thanks for representing your community.

**(The witness withdrew.)**

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**Mr JOHN McNEIL**, Committee Member, Inner West Bicycle Coalition, and Secretary, Better Streets Australia, affirmed and examined

**Mr NEIL TONKIN**, Advocacy Coordinator, Inner West Bicycle Coalition, sworn and examined

**Mr PETER McLEAN**, Chief Executive Officer, Bicycle NSW, sworn and examined

**Ms SARAH BICKFORD**, Active Transport Planner, Bicycle NSW, affirmed and examined

**The CHAIR:** I welcome our next witnesses to the last session this afternoon before our public forum. I assume there are short opening statements to make. From the Inner West Bicycle Coalition, who's making that one? Mr Tonkin.

**NEIL TONKIN:** The bicycle is the most space-efficient transport mode. It requires no more energy than a human's normal food intake, does not cause environmental damage, improves human health and is relatively inexpensive, thus providing broad access to ownership. In crowded cities, it is an essential mode of transport. Countries like Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France and Italy have embraced its widespread use. There, cycle facilities blend into the street environment as a standard provision, with increasing prevalence. In Australia, however, State and Federal governments still perceive cycling merely as a recreational activity, with policies and infrastructure funding reflecting this stance.

Until World War II, the bicycle was common on Sydney's streets, offering many an easy, low-cost mode of transport. Conversely, the private motor car is space-inefficient, consumes toxic fossil fuels, offers scant health benefits and is costly. Its convenience is alluring, which seems to determine governments not questioning—or they don't want to question—its prevalence. Minimal effort is invested in facilitating bicycles, a crucial element of active transport. The ultimate impact of the Rozelle interchange and parklands echoes these tendencies. Motorways often overwhelm the Rozelle, Balmain, Lilyfield and Annandale areas. A large children's playground of cycleways in the parklands has been established, yet it lacks proper connections to the adjacent suburbs. These suburbs, with their dense settlement patterns, are ideal for a coherent, connected cycleway network to enable healthy mobility for residents.

It's noteworthy that most car trips in the inner west are under five kilometres. That's a symptom of car-centric road planning. Our report elaborates on how Planning and Transport, both those State departments, have overlooked active transport in the WestConnex project. Existing cycleways have been disrupted, pathways end abruptly at kerbs, and cycling facility improvements are an afterthought. As a result, the contractors building the interchange and parklands have ignored our pleas for sensible cycle facility continuation and enhancements. Cycle facilities could be implemented at a fraction of motorway costs. We advocate for a metro-style public transport system, seamlessly integrated with walking and cycling facilities, which would have benefited our vibrant inner west.

Instead, we are burdened with an ill-fitting urban motorway, causing widespread dissatisfaction and increased stress. The apparent sole beneficiary of the Rozelle interchange is the private owner. Our report offers practical recommendations for enhancing current cycling facilities, through judicious civic planning, at a significantly lower cost than this motorway. It shows dangers to cyclists due to poor design, lack of allocated space, inappropriate speed limits and missing links to cycle destinations. Our recommendations strongly indicate that separated paths and greater space for cyclists are actually possible, coordinated with lower prevailing speed limits. We would welcome a site inspection by Transport for NSW officials, who have the authority to analyse and implement our suggestions.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Mr McLean, on behalf of Bicycle NSW.

**PETER McLEAN:** Bicycle NSW believes that WestConnex has failed on many levels. The Rozelle interchange is just one cog of an expensive, destructive, traffic-inducing and carbon-intensive project that has divided communities and entrenched car dependency for future generations. The tentacles of this project keep spreading across the city as more roads are widening to feed WestConnex. The shocking mess of the Warringah Freeway corridor does not include game-changing upgrades to the active transport network. The Sydney Gateway project has concreted over critical opportunities to connect the airport to the inner west. The Western Distributor changes will bring more traffic into Pymont, running roughshod over decades of hard work to improve pedestrian amenity. But no bureaucrats or politicians have been able to stand up to the juggernaut and press pause on these projects.

Urban motorways also come at a tremendous cost. WestConnex has cost \$16.8 billion, and another \$5.9 billion has been spent on related projects, such as the Warringah Freeway and the airport gateway. And now we have a commitment from the Government to subsidise tolls on the basis of equity, sucking another \$561 million

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from transport and housing projects that might actually improve equitable access to housing for Sydney's residents. The opportunity cost is also huge: hectares of land consumed that can no longer be used for housing and parks; billions of dollars squandered that could have been setting up Sydney as an amazing bicycle attraction and system and, of course, to rebuild footpaths for safer walking.

The precedent set by Rozelle interchange is a really dangerous one. Major projects will avoid delivering community benefits. They are not held to account when conditions of approval are not met, and certainly, in our opinion, we definitely believe that they have not been met—some of them—on this project. They are allowed to exacerbate transport and social inequity, while ignoring widespread State Government goals, such as net zero by 2050. They embed and prioritise vehicle traffic into Sydney's transport system, which is extremely hard to undo. We have made 10 recommendations for the Committee in our submission, and we ask all parties to refer to these. We also ask for the New South Wales Government to instigate a complete and systematic overhaul of Transport for NSW. This must include enshrining the purpose of Transport for NSW in legislation to serve all road users and, fundamentally, a shift from a traffic modelling to a vision-and-validate approach now embedded in forward-thinking transport planning processes.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I want to turn, firstly, to the issue of consultation with bicycle stakeholders, particularly in the—not the design phase; I think the design potential is well and truly done, but I am interested in that. You say in your submission that you advocated for the space—to reduce the space on Victoria Road, particularly, I think, in terms of Bicycle NSW. What involvement did you have around—we'll just stick with Rozelle interchange at this point. As an organisation, what consultation did you have during the design and approvals and consultation phase, broadly?

**PETER McLEAN:** From Bicycle NSW's point of view?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, please.

**PETER McLEAN:** We were certainly involved as a required body to be consulted with via the actual—the contractors that were delivering Rozelle interchange. That, in certainly my opinion, was done at quite a superficial level, which I guess wasn't genuine consultation.

**The CHAIR:** Can you expand upon that a little bit more? When you say it wasn't genuine and it was superficial, do you remember exactly what it was? Do you have that detail? In what form?

**PETER McLEAN:** I might let others comment on that as well, but, essentially, it was very superficial in terms of not detailed. We often get briefings and updates, but it's not a two-way conversation; it's not two-way communication. That, fundamentally, is not as in-depth or as genuine as certainly we would feel, particularly when we've got some really good ideas to share. Sarah, you might want to elaborate on that.

**SARAH BICKFORD:** Neil, in particular, was very much at the coalface of this process in the early days of the interchange design and planning.

**NEIL TONKIN:** Okay, I was there. I attended some meetings, where a Bicycle NSW employee was at. We had site inspections, and we attended a couple of briefings in the offices down at Lilyfield. Basically, they were very good at telling us what they were doing.

**The CHAIR:** Is this Transurban or Transport for NSW?

**NEIL TONKIN:** It's interesting. I think it would have been John Holland's people running this so-called community consultation process. It was quite a while before anybody from Transport for NSW appeared. We had site inspections with some people on Victoria Road, particularly where there's these couple of slip lanes that have been built so that motorists can just gaily cut straight across our bike path. We were just told, "No, no, this is in the plans and it's all been decided. That's it." So as far as I'm concerned the community consultation process was a bit like a lot of these other motorways—a bit of a sham. We were sort of listened to but we were also told that that's not in the plans and that's it. We were just trying to give some advice and we were pretty annoyed.

Also during the early construction stage, a lot of our bits and pieces of relatively good cycleway were removed. The bridge across Victoria Road at the end of Lilyfield Road and also the Beattie Bush Bridge that goes across further towards White Bay—all that was just summarily removed. We were given notice but that was a fundamentally important cycleway to get into the city and there were a lot of commuter bike people going into the city. In fact, the Anzac Bridge approach to the city was probably the second busiest cycle corridor on any one morning after the Harbour Bridge.

First of all we had our existing cycleways disrupted and then secondly, during this construction phase, we were told, "You just had to suck it and see. That's it. This is what we're doing." They didn't actually even comply with the Austroads standards as far as what you do with workplaces. There were things there where they

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were doing silly things like putting up signs saying, "Look up and live." That's a sign for the electricians so that they don't get their cranes tangled up in the wires. Looking down is very important if you're a cyclist because often we had to ride directly across steel plates and all sorts of mess and construction stuff on the cobbled-together routes which—the routes just said, "Pedestrians." We don't exist. We're not part of the equation, apparently. All I'm saying is that during construction it wasn't a great time for us and also any suggestions we had were not particularly well listened to.

**The CHAIR:** Can I ask about the cycleways over Victoria Road and the other one at the end of Anzac Bridge that you mentioned? I was a Balmain peninsula resident for three years almost two decades ago but I did cycle into work occasionally so I know exactly where you're talking about. Is it being replaced?

**NEIL TONKIN:** It's being replaced by a rather roundabout route—convoluted route—where you go a little bit—say if you come from Balmain, you can go towards Anzac Bridge and you can loop underneath and go back through the parklands to the west. Those cyclists that come from the west, a lot of them come up from Lilyfield Road. They come from Ashfield. You'd be surprised—we've actually done counts and found all sorts of people come from really weird destinations from miles away to the west. These are the rusted-on commuters; they're one particular type of cyclist. They've had their route disrupted completely by all these construction vehicles parked along Lilyfield Road. We were given to understand that the construction people would all be parking their vehicles onsite. They weren't; they were all stuck along Lilyfield Road so you had car doors flinging open left, right and centre.

We have a cycle lane onto Lilyfield Road that was how it was back in the '90s and it was sort of adequate. But then with all these parked vehicles there, it's not much fun on a wet, cold morning dealing with all these construction types jumping in and out of their utes or whatever. That was quite disruptive, that whole phase of construction. Then there were various phases where obviously they had to build certain elements of the route like a new bridge at Victoria Road over the old railway line and various things. We were directed in all sorts of convoluted ways around the site. It's like they didn't really want us there—that was obvious. Our treatment was not first-rate. That's what I'd say.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Can I just clarify: There was an overpass, was there, from the James Craig Road side across the City West Link that connected you to—

**NEIL TONKIN:** Yes, there was an overpass called the Beattie Bush Bridge. Basically it was a curved bridge—it cost \$20 million at the time—and I think the RTA put it in to alleviate problems they had with traffic coming off the Harbour Bridge. They wanted an extra lane on the City West Link. In doing so they took away our cycleway on the Rozelle Bay side. That bridge was very useful for us because it enabled people to come from Balmain and go straight over towards Annandale. That bridge was removed because the whole intersection, as we all know now, is much wider. We've got all these lanes coming in and out from the motorway, coming from the Iron Cove Link et cetera so that whole—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Was there any consultation about the removal of that bridge?

**NEIL TONKIN:** No, we were told that that's what was going to be in the plans. That's it.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So there is now no connection—

**NEIL TONKIN:** There's no direct connection. We've got to reroute ourselves around a longer way.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So how do you get to the other side? Is there a tunnel or—

**NEIL TONKIN:** No, there is no—if you're coming from Annandale, say, you know that there's these the two Anzac men sitting on the bridge? When you come from Annandale you can loop around underneath James Craig Road and come up and you can go up on to the northern side of the Anzac Bridge. You then go west and through a series of underpasses under the railway and then go off to Annandale. That particular aspect of it, long term, is bad. There are other aspects of the project that are better—there are two north-south links—but that particular aspect is no good.

I think in terms of linkages to the west—the business of putting some so-called disability ramps out on a curve on a hill at Ryan Street under Lilyfield Road is diabolical. Obviously they didn't want us near there because they've got their wonderful management facility for the motorway jammed up against the tram works as well. So all that area to the west—they didn't really know what to do with it so they just dumped us out on Lilyfield Road. That's not been a good outcome at present and it annoys us extremely because basically we knew that lots of people would've come from the west to try to get to the city and that major link has now been treated as just a little plastic curb ramp. Not good enough, it's fair to say.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr McLean, in your submission—

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**The Hon. WES FANG:** Sorry, Chair—

**The CHAIR:** Mr Fang's jumping in. We'll go to Mr Fang.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'm just having a look at the overhead of the new Lilyfield Road and there appears to be a number of connections that cross the motorway. There's obviously the connection on Catherine Street but there's also then, if you go further up towards the parklands, what looks like a commuter bridge and there's cycleways along the parklands. Haven't they actually increased the access for cyclists along that area?

**The CHAIR:** Who wants to answer that one? Mr Tonkin or—

**NEIL TONKIN:** Yes, they have actually made the north-south route across the ex-rail yards better but what we're contending is that the route east-west from Hawthorne Canal along Lilyfield Road and onto the Anzac Bridge has not been improved; it's been made worse.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** There are also alternative routes, like you said, and I know the area slightly. You can go down towards the fish markets and come out around that area and then head back into the city that way so instead of going along the Anzac Bridge, you've actually got a more level, flat route that follows along the east-west corridor that you're talking about.

**NEIL TONKIN:** We've always had the route that goes around past the fish markets. I'd have to advance that that's not a particularly attractive route for people who are trying to get to work on time. It's fine to tool around there—that's very nice. It's pleasant. It'd depend on where you work in the city but it's often quite awkward. There are various left and right turns in amongst the waterways, particularly past Bellevue House—I think it is—on the corner. So that's always been there. That's not being disrupted. We don't have any problem with that as a result of the motorway.

What we're contending is that this motorway has been dumped right in the rail yards where we actually have put forward other ideas that you could have a much better east-west route. In fact, it just hasn't occurred. The western end of the thing is hopeless. The eastern end is fine. It joins with the Anzac Bridge and, as you pointed out, there are two dedicated walking and cycle connections across the rail yards. That's fine. But the actual Lilyfield Road route itself is problematical. We've been sitting around waiting for the council for the last eight years to improve it. They've been sitting around waiting for what WestConnex is going to do. We still have not got resolution. They're coming up with another consultant. They've been deliberating—excessively, in our view—and still there are aspects of the Lilyfield Road route that are inadequate, in our mind.

We would've thought that this project, being something big that Transport for NSW is doing, would have actually thought about the implications of active transport and how it could be improved, as we say, at a fraction of the cost of the how many billion dollars the Rozelle interchange cost. It hasn't. It's just been left on the western end with a plastic ramp going onto the road, with no warning to any motorists that people might want to get into it or might want to emerge from the parklands. That's a very significant problem for us. People might find it nice to ride around the parklands with the nice paths but, if you've got family and kids and you suddenly then want to get home and want to get back onto Lilyfield Road, you're presented with vastly different traffic conditions than nice, carefully manufactured paths within the parklands. And it's not an unreasonable thing for people to want to actually get to the parklands.

There are not enough crossings of Lilyfield Road. As I said, the one at Ryan Street is laughable. There will be a lot of people wanting to come from Easton Park. There's no crossing there. There's a nice big access area with bollards and a nice smooth lip to ride across, but you can't get from Easton Park across. There must be lots of people with kids who want to ride their bikes in the parklands. There's no safe way. If you look in our report, we're suggesting that there should be modern-style combined pedestrian and bike crossings—parallel crossings—for people to access the parklands. There's no point having nice parklands if everybody is going to drive there, because we all know there will be quite big parking problems along Lilyfield Road. It would be sensible for people who want to get there and want to ride their bikes around the parklands to be able to ride to the parklands from the surrounding suburbs safely.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'm just looking, again, at the overhead. From the southern part of that Easton Park, there's a bollarded area that you can actually enter then onto the pathways across Lilyfield Road.

**NEIL TONKIN:** Yes.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Have you indicated that's unsafe?

**NEIL TONKIN:** Do I think that's unsafe? Yes—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'm curious as to how you interpreted that to be unsafe.

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**NEIL TONKIN:** Why I think it's unsafe—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** There are any number of crossing points from Easton Park onto the new parklands where you cross Lilyfield Road. Why would you indicate that that's unsafe?

**NEIL TONKIN:** Because it's just beyond a bend where Denison Road comes down. If you're taking—I mean, surely the parklands is a place where families would want to take their kids on their bikes? What are they supposed to do? Drive down with their bikes on the back of the cars, take the bikes off and ride around the parklands like Centennial Park or something? We're trying to have the place safer. Lilyfield Road has still got a 50 kph speed limit on it. It's not unusual to want to get across the road. If you're confronted by somebody who's just driven their car off the Anzac Bridge, turned left onto Lilyfield Road, tootling along there at 50, and then they're suddenly confronted by some little toddler on his mini bike trying to get across, surely that's a bit of a recipe for some sort of safety problem, don't you think?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** No, I don't. I think that what you're trying to do is create—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Wes, I'd like to ask some questions too.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** —problems where there aren't problems.

**The CHAIR:** Order! Mr D'Adam.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'm just being honest. I'm looking at what you're indicating are problems. I'm not seeing problems. I'm seeing that there's been quite a lot of integration for active transport in and around the parklands. I can see that there are transport routes—

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Is that a question?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'm indicating that—I want to know where these problems are. You're coming to give evidence today—

**The CHAIR:** Perhaps the bicycle coalition people could invite Committee members to jump on a bike and you can show us all the various spots and Mr Fang can come with us.

**NEIL TONKIN:** That's what I said.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'm happy to do that. But I'm not sure exactly what the issues are.

**NEIL TONKIN:** I'm more than happy to have a site tour with you, Mr Fang.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** It seems more like a grab bag of complaints of the last few years.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr McLean, in your submission, one of your points is number 3, a suggestion about putting bike lanes on either side of Victoria Road. I know you were in the public gallery for the previous witness's evidence—Ms Berriman—and she made a comment about the apportionment of road for users and was not particularly happy with having two lanes effectively dedicated to public transport. I'm a supporter of bikes and bike lanes. I'm a cyclist myself. But, in the circumstance where you've got views like the one expressed by Ms Berriman, where there's great concern about traffic, my question is: How do we get a social licence to be able to implement that process when all the pressure in terms of the advocacy that's coming before this Committee is really towards finding a solution around enabling people to drive more freely down the roads rather than constrain further the road access for vehicles?

**PETER McLEAN:** It comes down to whether or not we want a plan for an environment and a community that is choked up by motor vehicles and encourages people to be driving five kilometres and less with an inefficient vehicle. I'm all for motor vehicles and they're really useful tools when you've got to drive medium and longer term distances. Driving a vehicle five kilometres and less is very inefficient and costly to our environment and our community and our transport network. The real issue is we've got over two million car trips in Sydney every single day alone that's two kilometres or less. What we're trying to get is the mode shift with that. We're not anti-car, but we are anti driving two kilometres and less, because it's totally inefficient.

We want to see a mode shift and we want to see, "Build it and they will come." You build the roads, widen the roads and the motorists will continue to come and populate that road space. Build some efficient, effective, safe, separated cycleways and they will also come. We've got plenty of great examples in Sydney and, indeed, right around the globe around how we can increase that mode shift by putting in place safe, separated cycleways for bicycle users. Because, indeed, you can get from this location into the city quite comfortably in 15 minutes. You just have to be on a bike. You cannot do that in a car and, in the foreseeable future, you will not be able to do that in a car. I'd even challenge people that we'll never be able to do that in a car.



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**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Do you accept that bicycle travel, active transport is accessible only to a subset of all—

**PETER McLEAN:** No.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** There are elderly people who need transport—transporting young children. These are genuine needs—

**PETER McLEAN:** Totally agree, yes.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** —of transport users and a bicycle just can't satisfy that need adequately.

**PETER McLEAN:** I would definitely not support that viewpoint. I strongly believe, with the incredible technology and adaptability of active transport devices, particularly e-bikes and e-cargo bikes—I transport my two young daughters with my e-bike quite significant distances. I don't expect everyone to do that. But in short distances you can easily transport—with an e-bike, that is—your young children and your groceries and light cargo. There are really well-designed devices out there that are very safe, very easy to ride. We've got members of Bicycle NSW over 80 years old who aren't even on e-bikes; they're still on traditional pedal bikes. But, with the advent of e-bikes, we're seeing more and more adaptability and usability of young people, older people, beginners, less able people with knee, ligament damages, all sorts of challenges with their mobility—are able to access these devices and certainly participate in an equitable transport network.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Thank you all for your submissions, but particularly Mr McNeil and Mr Tonkin. I was extremely impressed with your submission and the level of detail you went into. I thank you for that. It's refreshing to have very specific recommendations given. I do also appreciate the amount of effort that would have gone into collating all of that. I have two related questions. Firstly—and perhaps forgive me, it might have been in the preface—have those very specific recommendations been shared with others, for example, Transport for NSW or the council? Secondly, you have got 31 of them. Are you able to prioritise them in terms of biggest impact, that kind of thing?

**NEIL TONKIN:** First of all, I circulated this not only to this inquiry but I sent a copy to John Graham, Jo Haylen and I have forgotten the planning Minister's name, because Planning is implicated in this.

**PETER McLEAN:** Scully.

**NEIL TONKIN:** Mr Scully. Thank you. There were some very poor recommendations in the EIS, where it just said, "Oh well, that active transport stuff, the peripheral stuff can just be done by others with the local councils." As we all know, local councils don't have very much capital expenditure budgets. They rely upon the State Government. So all those people were told. Also, I've circulated this to the Inner West Council, all the councillors. On top of that, we've also prepared a response because they're doing a master plan for Rozelle Parklands and the content is very similar to what is in this.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** In terms of prioritisation, is there any way to—

**NEIL TONKIN:** Okay, I would say, yes, I am responding to the fact that Victoria Road was very poorly handled. The conditions were rubbish. They wanted to put some sort of a route between Springside Street and Robert Street that went up and down and over the ridges of Rozelle on the south side of Victoria Road. It would be a very big priority of us expecting the Government to do something about putting a good-quality cycle route on the north side of Victoria Road. That involves invoking the draft master plan, I think—the local master plan for Rozelle.

I take note of what the P&C person has talked about with the lanes on Victoria Road. Obviously there will be some sort of trading having to happen about the bus lanes, the car lanes and a little bit of an extra lane space for us. Currently, the bike route that goes from the Iron Cove Bridge to The Crescent is littered with obstructions. We have all sorts of massive big signs plonked there and it's right in the bike path.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Yes, I saw that in the photos.

**NEIL TONKIN:** We've got a couple of bus stops where you can't even ride around the back of them. Riding around the back of a bus stop is the approved way to lessen the conflict with bus patrons. They're looking this way for the bus and they don't see some cyclist coming the other way. We've got sympathy for those bus patrons. It's not fun having a bike cut straight through the queue of people trying to get on the next 501 bus or whatever it is. That's conflict happening there that doesn't need to happen.

We're not actually asking for a lot of space; we're probably asking for one traffic lane's worth of space on Victoria Road. I know John Graham knew what was going to happen with all of this motor congestion that's

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going on as a result of the interchange. We've already written to him, saying, "Righto, you need to implement this Rozelle Town Centre master plan," which is going to transform that section of Victoria Road into something livable. It's a traffic sewer at present. That is a big priority in terms of what we're talking about here.

I think other things are that intersections further to the west are priorities for us because you cannot get easily from Leichhardt into the parklands. There are intersections that the RTA built years ago with smart cost-cutting measures. They didn't put pedestrian crossings on either side of the intersection. The corner of Balmain Road and City West Link—and Lilyfield Road—is a prime example. When a big project like this comes along, there's lots of money attached to it. We often look to that money—it's not going to kill the project to have a little bit of money spent on fixing up some local things.

Our contention with the parklands is, yes, you can get to it from the east—that's great—but you can't get to it very well from the west. That is a major commuting cycle route out towards the Hawthorne Canal. You've got the Greenway at Hawthorne Canal and you've got all sorts of other cycle routes coming from Canada Bay and points further west. They would be two priorities, two big things that I think could be addressed. I know we've had some discussion about the entrances to the parklands. That would be the next priority. It's just not good enough. If you're trying to make the area amenable to people to take the kids, you just can't have bits of Lilyfield Road with a speed limit of 50 kays an hour. It's got to be at least 40 or 30 to make the whole place slow down and get out of its old industrial character and into something local.

**The CHAIR:** I wanted to explore some of the issues that you raised in the report about particular hotspots, in terms of the Inner West Bicycle Coalition. One of the areas you've talked about already, but the cycle crossing at James Craig Road—

**NEIL TONKIN:** Oh, yes.

**The CHAIR:** —and however many lanes there are. Actually, do you know that?

**NEIL TONKIN:** There are a few lanes. Our point with that thing is that the cyclist is not directed to a nice straight route across; they've got to zigzag a couple of things. It looks like it's all orientated towards motorists or big trucks, in particular, coming off the Anzac Bridge and turning—

**JOHN McNEIL:** There are three lanes and a slip lane.

**NEIL TONKIN:** It's fine and it's legal for us to ride across that—we've got the lights and all that—but there is a sort of a slip lane as well. It's not a very clear path and motorists would wonder why these cyclists are veering all over the place. If it was made much clearer—okay, you've got a certain amount of time to get across but you need to make a nice, clear path. That was our point about that intersection.

**The CHAIR:** Have you heard from your members, both Bicycle NSW and the Inner West Bicycle Coalition, about whether there have been any safety concerns from them, individually, since the Rozelle interchange opened, about them taking extra risks? We heard this morning, for example, about pedestrians crossing large sections of road because they have to walk 10 minutes up the road, essentially, to cross. Have you heard any stories like that?

**NEIL TONKIN:** I know of cases where people still try to cross Victoria Road at Robert Street and there's no pedestrian crossing there.

**The CHAIR:** So this is on bikes now, or both?

**NEIL TONKIN:** Don't you worry, those delivery couriers will do anything that Google tells them. But yes, I've known of cases where people have tried to get across that intersection by bike. It's dangerous, because we've got six lanes to deal with. Why there's no pedestrian crossing there is probably a triumph of network efficiency, is what the Transport people would tell you.

**JOHN McNEIL:** I've seen a kid almost run over at the entrance to Lilyfield Road by someone coming off the Anzac Bridge, sweeping around through the lights and then going left and the kid—there's no pedestrian crossing, no facility for pedestrians or bicyclists to cross. Two kids were crossing and one almost got cleaned up by a car because that's a high-speed route and there's absolutely no warning or slowing for cyclists that are going up Victoria Road.

**NEIL TONKIN:** If you look at item 4, right, it's talking about Quirk Street. There's a bit of footpath there, which you shouldn't really encourage anybody to cycle because you could fall off straight into 60,000 cars a day or whatever happens on Victoria Road. That's very dangerous. We've seen people cycling there and there are tree roots to get over. It's awkward, it's stupid. It must be signposted to discourage people. What we're saying is that we want everybody to be on the other side of Victoria Road and there would be better linkages. We've got something in common with our lady from the P&C: We want a better crossing of Victoria Road at Darling Street,

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for instance. All those crossings need to be enhanced so that we can get to the north side of Victoria Road and then proceed on into the city.

**The CHAIR:** You were mentioning the consultation that you had with John Holland. Was that part of a formal consultation process around the cycling infrastructure that would be provided as a result of Rozelle interchange, or did you approach them to talk to them about what you would like to see?

**NEIL TONKIN:** As Peter has alluded to, Bicycle NSW was mentioned in the EIS, so they were legally required to consult with Bicycle NSW and/or us—one of our bicycle user group affiliates. That was initiated by them, but what I'm saying is that the actual process was the usual old stuff that I've been dealing with with motorways for years. They just don't want us in the picture; we are irrelevant. Well, we're not irrelevant. There are people that want to get about their local area by bike. These engineers, they just roll their eyes and they just don't want to know about it.

**The CHAIR:** I just want to be clear with this. So it was very clearly laid out as a condition in the environmental impact statement for Rozelle interchange that Bicycle NSW needed to be consulted on changes—I assume in terms of cycling infrastructure. Potentially there were promises made that for new cycling infrastructure you'd be accommodated. Is that part of it or is there a reason why you were specifically mentioned in that EIS?

**PETER McLEAN:** That's entirely correct. That's why we believe the conditions of consent were not met in a number of areas, including this one. In areas, they may be legally met, but in the spirit and intent of why we were included for that consultation, we certainly were not consulted with effectively or from a two-way basis. The other issue that certainly cropped up time after time was very high staff rotation and role changes within the organisation of John Holland particularly. There were meetings and consultations undertaken and then, all of a sudden, new staff members start from scratch again. There was no intellectual knowledge there and that hindered process very significantly.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. So—

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Can I just—

**The CHAIR:** No, Mr Fang, sorry. I'm just continuing this line of questioning. So the EIS mentioned Bicycle NSW. You stood there with a representative from John Holland—so this was Inner West Bicycle Coalition for Bicycle NSW, I'm assuming—you told them what needed to be improved, that you didn't support what was essentially part of a bike lane that traffic then cut through. They said, "Well, tough luck. It's going to happen anyway." Was that the consultation that happened?

**NEIL TONKIN:** Yes. I remember being on the site of Callan and Toelle street turn-offs of Victoria Road. If you're heading west on Victoria Road past Darling Street, as you go down towards the Iron Cove Bridge there's about two or three streets that go into a little bit of Rozelle there. I remember having a huge fight with this John Holland person who just didn't want to know about the fact that he thought he'd done a wonderful job at building a slip lane that enabled motorists to whip off Victoria Road at a great rate of knots and then just cut straight across what essentially was a shared bike and pedestrian way. There were no proper treatments of those slip lanes. We don't like slip lanes anyway; they just cut straight through what we're doing. But, basically, you could put a raised ramp there to make the motorists slow down and at least take a bit of notice of who might have been coming along the cycleway next to them. That was an instance where they just didn't want to know what we're recommending. What we're recommending is not illegal. It's something that's in the Austroads guides as to how you deal with that sort of circumstance.

**The CHAIR:** Was that the final design? Is that what made its way into—that's there now is it?

**NEIL TONKIN:** Yes. If you look at these pictures I've got, they're in the pictures now. Anyway, it's in there.

**The CHAIR:** That's all right. You have provided that.

**NEIL TONKIN:** Also, at the corner of Wellington Street and Victoria Road, we wanted the cycleway, the shared path, to be declared all the way eastwards up towards Darling Street, because that is a significant intersection where we can get across both ways to our favoured north side cycleway. Of course, the people didn't see. It was, "End of works, not in our brief. Don't want to know about it—that's it".

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. We are out of time for this session.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Chair, I just had one question to ask.

**The CHAIR:** Go ahead, but just very quickly.

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**The Hon. WES FANG:** Mr Tonkin, are you a Greens donor? Could I just check?

**NEIL TONKIN:** No.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Fang. That was your question.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** No? You've never donated to The Greens?

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** He just rides a bike; it doesn't make him a green.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, just because he's a cyclist, it doesn't make him a Greens member and donor.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** So what? So what if he is?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I've found a Neil Tonkin who's a donor of The Greens, so I'm just wondering if it's one and the same.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Even if you were, Sir, you're welcome.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Mr Fang, are you an idiot?

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr Fang. I didn't realise that this session would reveal a pathological hatred of cyclists, but there you go. That's what's happened.

**NEIL TONKIN:** If I am a donor of The Greens, Mr Fang, what is the problem?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** I'm pretty sure it's a free country. You can donate to whoever you like.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr Fang. We'll look forward to that invitation by the bicycle people for the Committee to all go out there and experience—

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** We thank you very, very much for your submission and your evidence today. Very gracious of you.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, thank you very much.

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** Yes, thanks for your contribution. It was all very good.

**The CHAIR:** The Committee will now have a break. We'll be back for our public forum which starts at 2.45 p.m.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**(Short adjournment)**

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**The CHAIR:** Welcome to this afternoon's public forum for the Committee's inquiry into the impact of the Rozelle interchange. For anyone who's recently joined us my name is Cate Faehrmann, and I am the Chair of this Committee. This public forum is an opportunity for the Committee to hear directly from community members who have been directly impacted by the opening of the Rozelle interchange. Before we commence, I'd like to make some brief comments about the procedures for today's public forum. Speakers were asked to register in advance for today's forum. Those of you who have been registered to speak will be called up to the lectern in turn. If time allows at the end of the public forum, however, anyone in the audience who wishes to speak will be invited to do so. You have approximately four minutes to speak to the Committee, and we will sound a warning bell at the three-minute mark so that you're aware you need to conclude your comments. A final bell will sound at four minutes. I will tell you that I intend to take my time keeping quite seriously as a Chair, so after four minutes you will need to wrap up very quickly.

What you say today is being transcribed and streamed live to the Parliament's website and will be included as evidence to the inquiry. It's also important that I note, again, that, while all participants are covered by parliamentary privilege, committee hearings and public forums are not intended to provide a forum for people to make adverse reflections about others under the protection of privilege. In that regard it's important that participants focus on the issues raised by the inquiry terms of reference and avoid naming individuals unnecessarily. Finally, I sincerely thank those who came along today to speak to the Committee. It's important that the Committee hears from the people who have been directly impacted by the Rozelle interchange. It will help shape our report and formulate what we hope are really important recommendations to the Government.

**Ms ELIZABETH ELENIOUS,** before the Committee: Pymont Action members expressed concerns about the impact on Pymont of the Rozelle interchange as far back as the consultation around 10 years ago. We were advised by Transport that there would be no impact as the Anzac Bridge was already at capacity. No statement was produced on possible traffic impacts in Pymont. Fast-forward to 2022, when we were presented with the Western Distributor improvements project which was aimed at reducing the potential for accidents associated with merging lanes on the approach to the city and the Harbour Bridge with the increase in traffic anticipated from the interchange. One could laugh now, in hindsight, when one has to cross four lanes of traffic in the short distance between the interchange and the first off-ramp to Pymont if travelling by Victoria Road. We didn't oppose the proposal to construct a new bypass, which obviates the necessity for the Western Distributor lane changes, but quickly realised that these proposals could have a huge impact on traffic in Pymont.

The 501 bus is to be rerouted to the second Allen Street off-ramp on its journey to Central, missing Pymont altogether. The right-hand turn from the lights at the bottom of the Pymont off-ramp into Bank Street is to be removed. All traffic from the Anzac Bridge will be required to proceed south to Pymont Bridge Road. Those travelling from the west who live and work in the north-west corner of Pymont will now have to turn left into Pymont Bridge Road, left again at its intersection with Harris Street and then either proceed down Harris Street or to Bowman Street, or turn into Miller Street to access Bank Street. This will involve four sets of lights and choke already clogged intersections in Pymont Bridge Road and Harris Street. Two reasons are given for this prohibition: One, an emergency vehicle bay is required near the exit into Bank Street; and, two, it will reduce traffic backup to the Anzac Bridge. In fact, it will increase backup as all traffic will proceed to lights at Pymont Bridge Road, whereas now the off-ramp lanes bifurcate vehicles both north and south along Bank Street at the same time.

These changes will occur when the current fish markets move to their new home in Pymont Bridge Road. We have sought a site meeting with Transport to discuss alternative sites for the emergency vehicle bay without success. We have sought meetings to work out an alternative bus route, to enable passengers to disembark or enter the 501 bus in Pymont, without success. We have pointed out that the Blackwattle Bay Precinct strategy foreshadows massive development along the Blackwattle Bay foreshore, with 36-storey towers on podiums and a plan for a 33-storey residential tower and two 21-storey office buildings behind the foreshore developments. We have already been advised by Hymix that 120 heavy vehicles a day take the right-hand turn-off to reach its concrete batching plant. They will now have to drive through the main shopping precinct in Harris Street and down Miller Street to reach the plant. Absolute silence from Transport.

The only feedback we've received is from the roads Minister, who advises that the detour that we'll all have to make through Pymont is only around 400 metres and would take two minutes. Through four sets of traffic lights! Tell him he's dreaming. We ask the Committee to recommend that Transport go back to the drawing board and come up with a new plan that retains the right-hand turn from the Pymont off-ramp and locates the emergency vehicle bay underneath the Western Distributor, which will be vacated by the fish markets for a car park. Any further improvements should be developed in close consultation with community representatives.

**The CHAIR:** Now we're calling up Mr Keith Stallard—and just letting everybody in the forum know that this is an opportunity for us to hear from the public, and we don't ask questions of those who speak.

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**Mr KEITH STALLARD**, before the Committee: Good afternoon, Ms Faehrmann and members of the inquiry team. I am a long-term resident of White Bay in Balmain, which is just next to the Rozelle interchange. I'm speaking here both as an individual resident and as the public officer of the Rozelle Parklands Active Transport and Community Hub. I am also speaking on behalf of two-thirds of the residents of Rozelle who, in a recent questionnaire by Inner West Council, said that they would cycle to the city if the cycling infrastructure was good. I'll start by listing some of the negative impacts on me and other cyclists when in the Lilyfield Road and Victoria Road corridors. Both of these corridors have been defined by Transport for NSW as strategic cycleway corridors that should, and I quote Transport for NSW, "provide safe and convenient cross-city cycleway connections". Indeed, Transport for NSW has identified completion of the Lilyfield Road connection as an immediate opportunity. But it hasn't taken advantage of that.

To characterise the impacts, I'm going to use the five criteria that Transport for NSW developed in its cycleway design toolkit, which says that cycleways should be safe, direct, connected, attractive and comfortable. We agree; however, the active transport infrastructure in Victoria Road and Lilyfield Road is not direct. Removal, without providing other convenient options, of the two shared footpath bridges over the City West Link and Victoria Road, near the junction with the City West Link, has forced cyclists and walkers to take less direct and more onerous routes. The active transport routes are often unsafe. The popular shared path along the eastern side of Victoria Road is narrow, poorly surfaced and has many obstacles. There are currently 102 poles in the cycleway in the 1.2 kilometres from the Iron Cove Bridge to the City West Link.

Instead of relocating these dangerously placed poles, as Transport for NSW's own consultant recommended, WestConnex has actually installed some more and this is making it much more dangerous for cyclists. This is one of the problems that has led the organisers of the Biennale in the White Bay Power Station to make the following announcement:

The Biennale of Sydney has made the decision to not promote transportation by bicycle due to safety concerns. The designated bike paths are not secure with substantial risks involved.

That's the organiser of the Biennale. The active transport routes are not conveniently connected. The removal of the two bridges I just mentioned has made it particularly difficult for cyclists living in Balmain. Routes are often not attractive; the routes are rarely comfortable. Moody Street to Rozelle Parklands, which is sometimes suggested as an alternative to Victoria Road, includes steep hills and requires negotiating nine road junctions, one with traffic lights, and six changes in direction in one kilometre. In short, much of the active transport infrastructure is inappropriate and not fit for purpose. This is not as promised and is a result of failure of the planning process or perhaps even abuse of it.

Commitments made in the environmental impact statement and formalised in the Department of Planning's conditions of approval were progressively eroded. The urban design and landscape plan often ignored government policies, such as the Active Transport Strategy. The designs adopted do not comply with the guidelines and standards of the Federal Government nor of Transport for NSW. Consultation was undertaken but was ineffective and lacked an empathetic approach. The advice of Bicycles NSW, as we've heard, and local walkers and cyclists was not seriously considered. What's the solution? The solution may be easier than for cars. Those responsible, senior managers of Transport for NSW and the Department of Planning need to ensure that the active transport elements of the Rozelle interchange are brought into compliance with the legally binding conditions of approval and all applicable policies, guidelines and standards.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Stallard. To hear from everybody, I have to be strict.

**KEITH STALLARD:** That's fair enough.

**The CHAIR:** If you want, you can always submit your written speech as well.

**KEITH STALLARD:** I will do that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. If you could table that.

**Ms MARGUERITE YOUNG**, before the Committee: Thank you for letting me speak today. I've been involved in this process since 2017. Where do I start? I am here mostly representing my street and how I've been affected has also affected most of my neighbours. They have small children, they work, they're unable to attend unfortunately. I'm fifth-generation Australian to live in the Annandale, Rozelle, Balmain area, going back to the convicts so I know the area pretty well. I bought my house in 1977 in Pritchard Street. If that's the City West Link, Pritchard Street is above it. There's Railway Parade going below and Pritchard Street is above. I'm on the side of a hill and there's a hill behind me, so any noise from City West Link just comes straight up. I'm also opposite the pigtail bridge and the M4 tunnel entrance and exits where there are traffic lights. Over the years, I put up with all of the construction—and it was a lot of construction.

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With the pigtail bridge, a neighbour from Lilyfield, one from Railway Parade and myself formed a team and for years and years we tried to get information about the pigtail bridge. I have one of the fact sheets from 2017. It's a lovely line going through bushland and we had no idea what it was going to be. We had lots of meetings. I became very well acquainted with the team, WestConnex's John Holland team. I've coined a new term and that's a wall of empathy, and that's dealing with bureaucracy. You can use it if you want. I'm going to tell the Macquarie Dictionary. It is when people empathise with you and they might say they'll talk to someone but nothing happens. In fact, I've often been telling people I'm meant to be getting advice from information about certain things.

I'm going to mainly talk about the pigtail bridge. It took two years. It's over-engineered. I'm a cyclist; it didn't need to be done like that. But I did get the green verge planted up. That took work with council, with Transport and John Holland but we had that built and it took two years, and that's growing up now. So that's one of the issues slightly solved but it took the community to do that. Then finally it opened and I was in and out on holidays, but I was home one day and there was this incredible noise like an aeroplane taking off and it kept going. Then it was on and off, and it took three weeks of EPA, Transport, WestConnex, everybody to get answers. Over six weeks, I finally got the fan noise turned down with the help of Kobi, who went directly to the Minister. The fans in the tunnel—the noise is only controlled by fan speed. There should be noise attenuation; it was never done. I'm all muddled up. It's the M8 that I'm dealing with. The M4 East actually has noise attenuation; this one does not.

With the traffic lights, I went away, I came home—I'd been staying in cheap hotels in Montevideo and Buenos Aires—and the noise from the trucks was incredible, worse than anything I stayed in overseas in those places. The trucks all stop at the lights for the M8 tunnel. When they take off and enter and leave, all the traffic has to stop. When they take off from their brakes, it's incredible. The motorcycles—the emergency traffic has to slow down as well. The wall is really old. It hasn't been fixed for a long time. It's way lower than any other wall. We have photographs of all the walls. It's inappropriate. There's no noise attenuation and we get it directly.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you so much, Ms Young. I'm sorry to cut you off. I know you had so much more to tell us. Do we have Ms Cassie Plate here? No. I will say at this point, if the hour isn't up and there are some people who started speaking and wish to take a little bit more time and if we do have them, you're very welcome to come up and finish your contribution. Mr Atkins?

**The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM:** What about John Macleay? John Macleay was next.

**The CHAIR:** He's scrubbed out. He's not here. Just trust me as Chair please, Mr D'Adam. That would be great. Go ahead, sorry.

**Mr WILLIAM ATKINS,** before the Committee: Thank you to the Committee for this opportunity to contribute. My name is Will Atkins. I've lived in Balmain for 20 years and pass through the area around the Rozelle interchange almost daily in various ways on public transport, walking or driving a car. I want to focus on the impact and remedies around community connections with our streets, parks and public transport routes. I see and experience the traffic mess around the Rozelle interchange, but we have to be careful that the understandable outcry around car and traffic dysfunction doesn't bind us to yet more community-harming road development.

The principles of the New South Wales Government Active Transport Strategy seem to have been overlooked in the Rozelle Parklands development. It's a barrier to the proposed Sydney CBD to Parramatta foreshore walk. It runs counter to the 15-minute cities principles, which moves us away from car-based connections. My suggestions to remedy the current outcome include to use the Bays West precinct project to fix some of the harmful effects of the Rozelle interchange. It's right next door and it overlaps geographically with some of the community damage from WestConnex.

Having engaged as a member of the public with WestConnex and the current Bays West community consultation, I'm concerned that exactly the same types of failures could occur again and there could be the same mistakes because community inputs are not being taken seriously. But if done well, the positive steps that could be taken within the scope of the Bays West project are these: to reconnect the White Bay Power Station area to the Blackwattle Bay-Rozelle Bay foreshore for walkers and bikes. There used to be the overhead ramp, which was discussed earlier with Bicycles NSW, the Beatrice Bush Bridge, and that was demolished to make way for the WestConnex extension. Now it's at least a 15-minute foot journey around multiple road crossings, ramps and stairways.

Next is to calm and slow down traffic entering Rozelle from Anzac Bridge, especially vehicles heading down Robert Street, Rozelle, past the White Bay Power Station and I think also Lilyfield Road. These are just metres from the Rozelle Parklands—literally a stone's throw—and they have been trashed in the construction and not fixed up and we are just left with the detritus around Rozelle Parklands. The area outside the White Bay Power

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Station on Robert Street is a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone but it's traffic anarchy and highly dangerous to pedestrians.

The Sydney Biennale is on right now, as we heard today, and it's brilliant. But Robert Street outside looks like it's prepared for a riot, with temporary fencing and absurd pedestrian diversions hundreds of metres up the road. It was wrecked during the development of the interchange and just left. It's supposed to be a landmark development site, including a new metro station and waterfront parks. Set the tone now with street softening and transport routes and that would be a tangible community dividend.

Public transport interchange 442 and 441 bus services, the 501 to 510 bus services, and the Rozelle Bay Light Rail metro at the White Bay Power Station are all clustered in the same area and are an ideal intermodal interchange. As the crow flies, they are just a few hundred metres apart but the Rozelle interchange is created like a Berlin Wall of barriers between all of these modes of transport and has rendered them ineffective. Focus on those connectivities.

Reinstate the Glebe Island Bridge as a walking and cycling route between Pyrmont and Rozelle. Anzac Bridge is not optimal. Reclaim Victoria Road, Rozelle, for the local community now that its role as a channel between Anzac and Gladesville bridges has been superseded by a toll free tunnel. You mentioned it was a ghost road this morning; it is. For 18 hours a day, there is no-one on it. This surge traffic situation is robbing us of a great opportunity. I will conclude there. Thank you very much, everyone.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Atkins. I believe the next person here is Mr Ben Prag.

**Mr BEN PRAG,** before the Committee: First of all, I would like to thank you, the Committee, for giving me the opportunity to speak. I would like to talk to reference term (d) of the inquiry, which is the interchange's impact on public transport. Firstly, though, if the members of the inquiry will indulge me, I would like to read a few quotes from one of my favourite websites. It's called the New South Wales Government Future Transport Strategy. It says:

Transport for NSW will continue to shift its focus from moving vehicles to moving people. We're carrying on reshaping our transport networks from a collection of disparate modes into an integrated and multimodal system.

All public transport modes contribute to delivering 30-minute cities, which reduce private vehicle use and increase sustainable transport use.

We'll break down the barriers that prevent people using public transport by refreshing terminals and interchanges to reduce connection times.

Finally, and this is my personal favourite, it says:

We're planning to make our cities more sustainable and liveable by reducing traffic congestion.

Those are all real quotes, by the way. You can check them out for yourself at [transport.nsw.gov.au](https://transport.nsw.gov.au). It doesn't take a genius or even a qualified transport planner to understand that building more roads specifically designed to carry private cars into the CBD was doomed to failure or that creating a bottleneck where 12 lanes merge into four on the Anzac Bridge was going to create traffic chaos. It is, however, particularly galling that the biggest losers from the debacle that is WestConnex, and in particular the Rozelle interchange, are the very people that the Government claims that they want to encourage: The people who are trying to do the right thing by using public transport.

One of the worst aspects of the interchange—and there are many to choose from—is the fact that the three lanes on Victoria Road are merged into one lane on the Anzac Bridge within about 50 metres. I don't have this written down because it happened this morning after I wrote the speech, but the bus I took in this morning had to brake suddenly because it was trying to merge in with everything else. I was standing up and there were plenty of old people on the bus. There is going to be a serious accident there. Somebody is going to get hurt. It's an absolute disgrace.

This causes a big choke point and has a ripple effect back along Victoria Road. The other two main arterial roads, being the City West Link and WestConnex itself, are impacted as well but the merges are longer and they are more generous. They have been given a better shake of the sauce bottle, as Kevin Rudd would say. Somebody actually prepared a diagram. I don't know if you can see that. It makes it pretty clear what's going on there. You've got 12—depending on how many you count—or 14 lanes going into four. It's never going to work.

**The CHAIR:** You can table that document for us at the end.

**BEN PRAG:** I would like to fact check it first, maybe. Where was I? The main point is the volume of public transport users on each of the main three roads that merge into the bridge. Let's have a look at WestConnex M4 first of all. There are zero bus services and I think it's pretty unlikely to ever have a bus service, considering it's a private toll road. The City West Link has one bus route. If you look at Victoria Road, there are 10 bus routes



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probably carrying, I don't know, tens of thousands of people in the morning peak. These are the people that are getting completely messed around by the Government.

How can the Government in any way justify prioritising single occupancy car use over mass transport users when planning any major transport project? I consider myself to be a practical and pragmatic person and I recognise that cars have their place in the transport mix but, if anything comes out of this inquiry, it surely must be to call for an immediate moratorium on new roads, public or private, that encourage private vehicles to drive into or through the city. Let's stay consistent to the Government's own strategy and spend the money on what other modern cities have learnt and we should already know: Reliable and affordable public transport is the only solution that should be on the table from now on.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Prag.

**Mr RICHARD HUGHES,** before the Committee: I don't have anything prepared. I had three points I wanted to make, but that's expanded to five after listening to some feedback. The first is the communication originally of the changes of the Rozelle interchange. I was signed up and reasonably well informed, but other people driving along Victoria Road—I used to go to Hunters Hill for dog training on a Monday morning and it was clear when it opened that the communication was poor. Poor is an understatement.

Signage is dreadful. I think it's dreadful throughout New South Wales. If you go over the Anzac Bridge heading west, it tells you to be in the right-hand two lanes to go to the airport—there is an airport sign—and then you get to the final signpost just before the Victoria Road City West Link or whatever it's called and there is no airport sign, so do you go right onto Victoria Road or do you go straight left onto the City West Link? There is no sign. That is just one example of a litany that I could list of poor signage on the roads, but specifically linked to the supposed improvement of the project.

The third one is testing, simulation and measurement of project success. I work in the private sector and we measure the success of projects. You have had years of data to collect to measure average traffic time from Iron Cove Bridge to Anzac Bridge and days of ANPR. You could easily track cars to see how long it took them and instantly we could have got a measure of success of the project. But it just seems lacking. I have two other points. One of the previous speakers mentioned that, if you come from Victoria Road and you want to go left onto the Fish Market exit over Anzac Bridge, getting across that from lane four to lane one—I drive my wife to Harris Street most mornings, and it is dangerous. It's an accident waiting to happen.

My final point, very quickly, is about the integrated transport policy. I have a dog. Apologies if this is outside the scope of the Committee's terms of reference, but what's the point of having a commitment to letting people use public transport when almost everyone cannot take their dogs on ferries, buses and trains and so you are forcing those people to use cars to make the traffic situation worse in one of the busiest intersections in the world. I live two or three minutes from Balmain East wharf. I am lucky. My dog is only nine kilograms. I'm fit and able bodied. I can carry her in one of the closed crates, but most people can't. Therefore, you are committing people, if they want to go out with their dog, to not using public transport. They have to use cars. It's just a farce. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Mr Hughes.

**Mr JP ALEXANDRE,** before the Committee: I am from Friends of Ultimo. Sorry, we did not intend to speak, so I've got nothing ready. I just want to point out that the situation we are in was entirely predictable but was also so early predicted. We all remember the numerous submissions we made, the forums we attended and the rallies we went to a decade ago. So that was predicted. The second point is that Ultimo is not directly affected by the Rozelle interchange, but it is affected nonetheless. When you attract so many cars in a toll highway, they have to get out somewhere. Transport for NSW has organised two exits in our peninsula, bringing more cars. This is absolutely contrary to the Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy—which is own, government's own—which promised less cars, more transport and more active transport and we get more cars. Harris Street, which is now fed with cars from the Allen Street exit, was promised to be a boulevard with tree-lined footpaths et cetera. That was our point. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, JP. That's the end of the list of the people who have registered to speak. I wanted to check, is there anybody else here who hasn't registered who does wish to make a contribution? The lady at the back, come on down.

**Ms MÁIRE SHEEHAN,** before the Committee: I didn't actually register to speak.

**The CHAIR:** That's okay.

**MÁIRE SHEEHAN:** I agree with everything that people have said because it's been a disaster, to be quite frank. The thing I wanted to mention is I was on the stakeholder group who were being consulted right

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through the process with the various groups—I'm going back a decade now—including at the end John Holland, the contractor. We made various suggestions. People both in Annandale—I'm on the Annandale side—and people on the Lilyfield-Rozelle side as well made suggestions about things that could be done to mitigate the potential traffic that was going to come through. Do you know what the problem was? Each of those suggestions would have had to come from the Government's budget. Guess what?

The funding for the Rozelle interchange for the WestConnex comes from TCorp, which is a corporation that is only there to make money and is only available to the Executive arm of the government, which is the government that is in power on the day. So it's not the current Government who made all these decisions. Again, each of the bureaucrats said, "Yes, that's a good idea." There were planners there—people who understood transport—and local people who also understood it, but every time they went back, they were told, "No, sorry. We don't have any money in the budget." I think a critical issue is what that TCorp money is used for, because the only purpose for that WestConnex was to make money. It was nothing about the public good. Thank you very much.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Ms Sheehan. Is there anybody else in the audience today who hasn't made a contribution and wishes to? No. Ms Young, I interrupted you. You hadn't quite finished. Did you wish to speak for a minute or two? I felt like you did have something further to contribute. You don't necessarily have to. I'm giving you the opportunity if you do wish to, though. Also, Mr Stallard, I think I interrupted you as well. Maybe another two minutes for these two if they wish, if members are okay with that.

**MARGUERITE YOUNG:** I read the terms of reference and it did state about communications. I found the communications during the construction phase just absolutely, totally inadequate. As I said, there was a wall of empathy with no information. I must tell you, I was part of No Westconnex Annandale and also the foreshore group. The foreshore group had direct contact with the Minister—I think that was political—and No Westconnex Annandale got absolutely no shift at all. They did put in incredible submissions. I know with the traffic, they actually had engineers do a whole lot of modelling. They put in lots of modelling and it was totally ignored. I must say, since the opening it's been a lot better with communications. I've felt I have been heard. I have a direct line now to Transurban. I don't know whether or not it's someone higher up, but I think there's someone higher up looking down. I feel that according to communication—that was one of the terms of reference, to see how that went.

It is actually impacting my neighbours incredibly. One is seriously thinking of leaving, and they've been in their house for at least 15 years, and the other one is desperately trying to plant things. They're supporting me being here today because they want to be taken out in a box, like me. But, really, it's not acceptable. I've put up with the shunting. When I bought my house I had the shunting. I've now got the planes—I've got everything. But the noise of the fans, I never knew when it was going to come on. I've been told by acoustic engineers that that is the worst possible sound. It's a low humming and you don't only hear it, you feel it. I'm terrified that, without proper noise attenuation, they're going to put the fans up as soon as there's more pollution. Also it's just shocking—the walls. The walls are just terrible, if you have a look. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Stallard, did you wish to complete your contribution as well?

**KEITH STALLARD:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for allowing me to do that. I only had a little bit left, so it will be less than two minutes. It's good news, because what I wanted to say is I was talking about the problems for active transport, but there are solutions, which you asked to hear about. I think the solution for active transport is actually easier than the solution for cars. The cost would probably be lost in the margin of error in the estimates of costs for Rozelle interchange. What needs to be done is the senior managers of Transport for NSW and the Department of Planning need to ensure that the active transport that they promised to deliver is delivered according to the conditions of approval, because they're not at the moment. That will encourage mode shift from private cars to active transport. That will bring benefits not only to the cyclists and walkers but also to the larger community. It will bring environmental, social and health benefits. With a little bit of luck, it might slightly reduce the congestion at the Rozelle interchange.

I think there's been a bit of confusion with the documents. Together with the people that spoke earlier—that's the Inner West Bicycle Coalition and Bicycle NSW—we developed this document called *Rozelle Interchange Active Transport Non-compliance and Defects Report*. It took us several weeks to do it and a lot of research. There may be a few errors, but I think we got it mostly right. Could we encourage the inquiry please to read this and take it seriously? By the way, I've invited Howard Collins to come cycling with us along the active transport corridors. He hasn't replied yet but he has admitted that he's a keen cyclist. If any people on your panel would like to join us, we'd be only too pleased.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, I'll take you up on that. That would be great.

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**KEITH STALLARD:** Thank you.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Have we got that document?

**The CHAIR:** Yes, if we could table the report—but we do have it.

**RICHARD HUGHES:** Can I add one more point? One final point I forgot to raise, sorry—and Kobi, I know, has raised this on many occasions—is the filtration of the smokestacks. I think it's absolutely abhorrent in the twenty-first century—I think we're in the twenty-first century, nearly one-quarter of the way through—that we get a mixed message. We're told to close our windows and turn on recycled air as we go into the tunnels, and yet they're telling us that the stuff that comes out of the chimneys is safe. So which is it? Should we turn on the recycling and close our windows because it's not safe or do we believe the evidence? It's just the next scientific disaster that we're locking in for future generations. I don't know. I hope not. But the solution is simple: We toll cars for using the tunnels. Have a pollution poll. They've done it in London; they've done it in all other cities. Don't charge EVs. It's again outside the scope of your inquiry, I'm sorry, but it appals me that there are no emissions standards in Australia for cars. The cars that emit the most should pay more and have, and we should be filtering the smokestacks, because it's just—I find it abhorrent.

**ELIZABETH ELENIOUS:** I had an incident the other day where I had to go to the White Bay terminal. I know that Ports likes everybody to take James Craig Road, so I set off from Pymont in the left-hand lane, expecting to be able to turn, as I used to do, into James Craig Road. I looked at all the signs—no turn-off. So I ended up in Drummoyne and had to chuck a U-ey and come back down Victoria Road—

**The CHAIR:** Oh my goodness!

**ELIZABETH ELENIOUS:** —which, of course, added to congestion. But there was no sign early in my journey onto the Anzac Bridge to tell me that I had to get into a particular lane to access James Craig Road. Now, all passengers, either leaving or going onto the ships in White Bay terminal, are required to use James Craig Road, and I'm wondering—there has been a big increase in people using Robert Street, who are probably doing the same thing that I'm doing and having to detour via Drummoyne to get there. So if you could add that to things that need to be fixed—and urgently. I mean, that's just a sign. Just get it done.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Elizabeth. I think we have exhausted the contributions from those present. Thank you so much for attending today, and thanks very much for your contributions. They were incredibly valuable for us. That is the end of our forum today. It's the end of our public hearing. It's not the end of this inquiry, however. We do have another couple of days in a couple of weeks where we get to ask questions of other witnesses, hopefully including the Government. That's the end of today's hearing.

**The Committee adjourned at 15:30.**