

Submission: WestConnex New M5 Environmental Impact Statement (SSI 14_6788)

To the Director, Major Planning Assessments, Department of Planning

I write to express my strong objection to the WestConnex New M5 motorway proposal.

Global experience of major toll road construction has demonstrated conclusively that these projects are enormously expensive and counter-productive. WestConnex will increase air pollution and encourage more car use, quickly filling the increased road capacity. It is not a long-term solution to Sydney's congestion problem.

The fact that the State Government has already signed multi-billion dollar contracts for WestConnex before this EIS was even placed on public exhibition undermines community confidence that this is a genuine consultation process.

This EIS considers benefits for all stages of the project but doesn't address the negative impacts along the whole route.

I object to this proposal because:

1) The New M5 will have devastating impacts on our local communities and local amenities.

From 2019, the New M5 and the existing M5 will be routed through to the proposed St. Peters Interchange. Up to 100,000 extra vehicles will spill onto local roads, particularly onto south King Street in Newtown which will be unable to accommodate such a massive increase in traffic. Stage 3 of WestConnex (joining the M4 and M5) is not planned to be completed until 2023 and is predicated on the sale of Stages 1 and 2 and the imposition of significantly high toll fees for decades. **There is no certainty that it will be built leaving local inner west suburbs in constant gridlock and residents subject to unacceptable levels of dangerous pollution and destruction of their amenity.**

There are over 80 homes and business that have been listed for compulsory acquisition in St. Peters alone. Residents are not being offered equitable prices for their homes and will be unable to find new homes in the area.

The construction of the New M5 and of all stages of WestConnex will have severe and lasting impacts on local communities. Just in St. Peters alone there will be more than 2,200 extra heavy and light truck movements per day for years.

2) The New M5 will be a massive contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, while destroying important habitat and greenspace.

This proposal will be a huge contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. Like all new roads, it will encourage greater use of private cars, leading to increased fuel consumption and air pollution throughout Sydney.

The impact of the New M5 on the largest green space in the inner west, Sydney Park is critical - as well as losing a significant portion of this park, there will be tunnels, ramps, ventilation stacks and multi lane roads with fast moving traffic, right alongside the park.

Many residents and visitors to this iconic area of Sydney will cut off from the park by the St Peters interchange and the widening of Euston Road to seven lanes between Sydney Park Road and Campbell Road. All park users and local residents will be subject to high levels of pollution and noise.

The WestConnex project will also lead to the destruction of more than 75 hectares of vegetation, including endangered Turpentine Iron Bark Forest and the critically endangered Cooks River Castlereagh Iron Bark Forest. The habitat of the vulnerable Green and Golden Bell Frog at Kogarah Golf Course at Arncliffe will also be slashed by the New M5.

3) Air pollution from the New M5 will be hazardous for our health

There's strong evidence about the dangers to human health from a wide range of vehicle exhaust pollutants, especially tiny particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (known as PM10s), and particulate matter that is less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5).

These tiny particles can penetrate deep into the throat and lungs and are known to cause premature mortality, worsen heart disease and asthma, and cause cancer.

The [WHO guidelines](#) state that small particulate pollution has health impacts even at very low concentrations and that 'no threshold has been identified below which no damage to health is observed. Therefore, the WHO guideline limits aim 'to achieve the lowest concentrations of PM possible.'

Research has shown that people exposed to diesel exhaust at high levels in enclosed spaces for long periods of time – such as truck drivers, railway workers, and miners – face up to 30 per cent increased risk of lung cancers, even after the effects of smoking are taken into account.

Most state regulatory bodies in Australia accept there is no safe level of exposure to diesel exhaust. As well as cancer, other health hazards are respiratory illnesses and heart disease.

- The results of air quality modelling for annual average PM2.5 in the WestConnex New M5 EIS, indicate that there will be an increase in the levels of this particle pollution at 63% of receptors along the proposed route.
- During the construction period, the New M5 EIS states that there will be up to 1,000 extra heavy vehicle movements (trucks) per day in the Kingsgrove and Bexley surface works area and approximately 1,240 extra light vehicle movements (presumably small trucks). The health impacts on the community and on workers from this amount of concentrated particulate pollution from diesel fuelled vehicles will be significant and is not adequately accounted for in the EIS or the updated Westconnex Business Case.
- By 2031 when the whole WestConnex project is slated for completion, total traffic demand will rise significantly, for example, demand in St Peters will increase by up to 33% and there will be significant increases in traffic on key roads within the project perimeters including sections of Parramatta Road, Broadway, King Georges Road, Stoney Creek Road, Bexley Road, Forest Road, Euston Road and many more smaller roads in local suburbs.

- The claim that there will be less emissions and pollution with WestConnex due to free flowing traffic just doesn't stack up. Total two-way traffic east-west across this part of Sydney will jump 53% by 2031. Such an increase is hardly going to improve air quality.
- Unfiltered ventilation exhaust stacks will be located less than 500 metres from homes, public schools, childcare centres, aged care facilities and hospitals in the west, south west and inner west suburbs on the Westconnex route. Vehicles that use diesel fuel are responsible for around 80 per cent of fine particle pollution from vehicles. According to a recent [ABC health report](#), the high hazard zone for health is considered to be 150 metres either side of busy roads – particularly within 50 metres. And, depending on the number of vehicles on the road, the levels can be up to 10 times higher than the usual city background – which is already at levels which are considered unhealthy. So the increases we can expect in dangerous air pollution by encouraging more vehicle trips and locating dangerous ventilation stacks next to homes, schools and hospitals, are completely unacceptable.
- The correlation between rises in particle concentrations and death rates from a variety of causes is proven with impacts that accumulate over a lifetime. Children are at greatest risk along with the elderly, and people with emphysema, asthma, and chronic heart and lung disease.

4) WestConnex and the New M5 is a financial black hole that won't solve Sydney's traffic congestion.

Global experience of major toll road construction has demonstrated conclusively that these projects are enormously expensive and counter-productive. Here in Sydney, taxpayers have pumped billions into the failed Cross City Tunnel, use of which is still well below project projections.

Recent research from the Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies at Sydney University has warned the Government that Sydney motorists are unwilling to pay for more tollroads. Instead, motorists will look for free back-road routes, pushing more cars onto local streets.

The WestConnex tollroad has blown out from an initial projected coast of \$10billion to \$16.8 billion and climbing. It will increase air pollution and encourage more car use, quickly filling the increased road capacity. It is not a long-term solution to Sydney's traffic congestion problem and as the most expensive transport infrastructure project in NSW, it does not address key community demands for efficient, inexpensive and world class public transport options. Rather it locks Sydney commuters into car dependency and use of privatised toll roads and for decades to come while sucking funds from public transport developments.

WestConnex does not offer sustainable solutions for the transportation of freight from Pt Botany or the airport which is one of the primary rationales for the whole project. It does not offer faster transportation to Mascot airport from the western suburbs and even the projected travel times using WestConnex are longer than the travel times using the existing rail infrastructure.

5) The WestConnex project including the New M5 lacks transparency and accountability.

The fact that the WestConnex Delivery Authority and now the Sydney Motorway Corporation have already signed multi-billion dollar contracts before this EIS and the previous M4 East EIS were placed on public exhibition, let alone given Development Consent, undermines community confidence that this is a genuine consultation process.

There are serious concerns about the way the WestConnex project has been developed and progressed regarding the lack of good governance, oversight and economic rationale for this major infrastructure project. The lack of transparency around the project, including state and federal governments' refusal to table documents detailing the cost-benefit analysis and traffic modelling used in the business case, is unacceptable.

The project's further planning and implementation will now be managed by the newly created private corporation, the Sydney Motorway Corporation. This will further obscure information about the project which should be openly available to the public.

The fact that the NSW Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and the NSW Treasurer hold shares in this corporation is a conflict of interest, given that their role as public officers should be to ensure that public funds and public/private projects are placed under the highest scrutiny.

6) The WestConnex project comes with no real evaluation of alternative options such as world class public transport.

The Department of Planning's Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) demand that the New M5 EIS provide 'an analysis of feasible alternatives to the carrying out of the proposal and proposal justification, ... including an assessment of the environmental costs and benefits of the proposal relative to the alternatives and the consequences of not carrying out the proposal), and whether or not the proposal is in the public interest.'

There is no apparent assessment of the environmental costs and benefits of the New M5 proposal relative to the alternatives and no adequate appraisal of whether the proposal is in the public interest.

I agree that I have not donated more than \$1000 to any political party, elected member, group or candidate within this financial year.

I agree to the NSW Planning Department publishing my submission on their website, including any personal details it contains.