

26 January 2016

Submission to the New M5 Environmental Impact Statement

I strongly object to the proposed New M5.

The suburbs of Alexandria, Erskineville, Ashmore, Redfern and Green Square will be heavily impacted

The roads around the new St Peters interchange are already at an unacceptable Level of Service and are getting worse because of in-fill developments not allowed for by the EIS including:

- * Green Square: 61,000 residents
- * Ashmore: 6,000 residents
- * Waterloo Estate: 30,000 residents
- * Central 2 Eveleigh: 56,000 residents, 25,000 workers.

With an extra 150,000 people in an area of a few square kilometres, this is going to be the most densely populated area in Australia.

There is no evidence that the traffic models have factored in this huge increase in density and vehicle traffic that will occur in the area.

The EIS clearly demonstrates that the traffic on roads in the Alexandria area will deteriorate as a result of WestConnex. But it also predicts that Level of Service will improve at many intersections even if nothing is done – in the case of Euston Rd/Sydney Park Rd, from D to A, in the PM peak. This is clearly wrong - so wrong that it suggests that the traffic modelling is broken (the EIS does acknowledge that "modelling is probably optimistic") and it suggests that the level of service on local roads will be several levels worse than predicted, either with or without the project.

Thousands of additional vehicles will clog already congested local roads

According to the business case, Euston Road will have 61,000 cars per day on 3 lanes each way. This is almost 10 times what the road can currently handle on 2 lanes. Therefore it is highly questionable how Euston Road will be able to accommodate 61,000 cars, however many lanes are added to it. Adding extra lanes to Euston Road will not help because the roads that Euston Road feeds are also gridlocked. Inevitably this will lead to rat-running on local roads.

Conversely, usage of the M5 is not growing, and has not grown for some years. This project only makes an existing road more expensive for commuters. It will save little time, if any, and at an exorbitant price. As the EIS acknowledges, the tolls are going to force drivers off the M5 and onto local roads. The Updated Strategic Business Case shows that for almost all of its users, the Value of Time saved is less than the cost of using WestConnex.

Unacceptable impacts on Sydney Park

This project will carve 11,000 square metres from Sydney Park and expose the rest of the park to vehicle fumes and noise. This damage is particularly felt, because this area already has one of the lowest amounts of public open space per person in Australia, even without considering the future in-fill projects that are already in progress.

Alexandria residents are already exposed to levels of PM2.5 particles that exceed national guidelines, yet

the EIS predicts that these levels will only worsen.

Westconnex does not represent value for money for NSW residents

The \$5 billion to be spent on the new M5 is a waste of taxpayers' money that could be better used on projects that improve public transport infrastructure across Sydney over the next ten years.

The cost of Westconnex continues to increase and does not represent value for money for NSW residents. The project cost has increased by \$7 billion from the original estimate – not including the cost of additional stages. This significantly reduces funding available that the NSW Government can put towards new public transport, new hospitals, new schools and environmental improvements.

Roads, especially tunnels, are expensive, and move relatively few people - perhaps 2,000 vehicles per hour per lane. This is a fraction of what can be moved by heavy rail, or light rail, or bicycles.

The EIS business case says that with toll roads, "losses to investors [are typical] due to traffic demand forecast being overly optimistic. This has led to a situation where it is likely the private sector sponsors will be unwilling [and the NSW Government is likely to have] to take on all or part of the development and start up traffic risk". Why does the NSW government think that WestConnex can be profitable when the private sector does not?

The EIS lacks detail and has misleading information

There is too little information in the EIS on the traffic volumes that will occur in Alexandria, and there is also conflicting information on possible mitigation strategies. Although the diagrams in the EIS show right-hand turn lanes in all four directions at the Sydney Park Road/Euston Road intersection, the text of "New M5 EIS Vol 2B App G Traffic and Transport" instead indicates that there will be a "banned right turn from Mitchell Road into Sydney Park Road [because of] the banned right turn southbound at the Sydney Park Road / Euston Road intersection". The text also indicates that there will be a "north-bound lane [which] will go as far as Maddox Street, where it becomes a new left-hand turn lane", but the diagrams do not show this. Not having clarity on which of these two scenarios is planned makes informed consultation impossible. If these right-hand turns into Sydney Park Road are not permitted, there will be enormous volumes of traffic on local roads as drivers rat run on local roads. Likewise, the extra left-hand turn lane, if it is actually planned, seems destined to drive traffic onto local roads.

I call for Westconnex not to proceed. As a NSW taxpayer, I want better value for money and improved public transport.

I have not made a reportable political donation.

Yours faithfully