

Secretary
NSW Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39, Sydney, NSW 2001

Submission to DP&E Project Number: SSI 14_6788 WestConnex New M5

I object to the New M5 and the Westconnex project in entirety. The strategic justification is weak and inconsistent with the NSW Governments Strategy planning and policy framework.

WestConnex, if completed, will be Australia's largest ever motorway and toll-road project. It is reasonable for the Public to be very concerned that the cost of this project has grown to \$16.8 Billion which is not wholly funded, and presents a significant opportunity cost. This level of investment could deliver other projects of significant economic and social value to the state which would benefit a greater number of people and businesses.

I strongly object to the project, and to the broader WestConnex scheme. The M5 Linear Park and what is left of the Beverly Grove Park was a mitigation to the residents for the legacy M5. The protection of the Cooks River Clay Plain Scrub Forest was a condition of approval. What is the point of mitigation and conditions of approval, to be ignored just 15 years later?.

It is unreasonable to expect the same communities to endure years of construction for a road project that fails strategic Justification.

There has been **no** compelling case for Westconnex to be built. It is shocking that the Sydney Motorway Corporation has now admitted that the New M5 will not work as a stand-alone project. It is also shocking that Sydney Motorway Corporation have advised that their traffic model does not function properly and presents results that can be misleading.

This is extraordinarily poor planning to plunge into a road project with inadequate assessment that then it is discovered that a myriad of more and more expensive toll roads, and more and more road widening in a desperate effort to make it work. This is extraordinary poor planning, and thus reasonable for the community to consider that this is road planning on the run.

The cumulative Impact of Road Building on Communities:

The communities of Beverly Hills, Kingsgrove, Bexley North, Earlwood and Arncliffe lived through years of construction for the first M5 circa 2001, (Legacy M5). We were granted mitigations for this endurance.

The legacy M5 resulted in a 'Berlin Wall' effect that separated our community into two. The North and South sides. It also had a devastating impact on residents in regards to pollution. Turrella and Earlwood, with an unfiltered exhaust stack, and Bexley North and Arncliffe with tunnel portals (openings).

Homes, the trees and parks taken. Years of construction, and then, to thank us for our endurance, we were handed cheap, visually divisive noise walls and poor urban design. The urban design and landscaping was of such a poor standard that Allambee Crescent Nth Beverly Hills actually features in the RMS Landscape and Design Principles as an excellent example of what **NOT** to do.

Allambee Crescent Nth Beverly Hills circa 2015.



Screenshot from the RMS Urban

Landscape Design Principles



The noise wall is visually

divisive and bears no contextual relationship to the setting in this residential area on the Northern side of the M5 East

It is a credit to Council and a few residents of these communities that they took the repair of our environment into our own hands. **We had no choice because the RMS would not.**



“Landscaping” by the Community & Canterbury Council – maturing growth circa 2015
below



The M5 turned out to be a noisy congested old fashioned solution to traffic congestion. But the NSW government has learned nothing. Again last year we found ourselves faced with new projects. Firstly there was the expansion of the King Georges Road Interchange and now a duplicate of the old failed M5 – call the New M5

What standard of repair can we expect from Westconnex 15 years later?

A review of the current KGR M5 Interchange Landscape Design shows that nothing has changed in the last 15 years. WestCONnex has already demonstrated the same scant regard for communities and offers only minimal rehabilitation after construction.

We are faced with the mature vegetation being stripped away as the walls are torn down for the early stage of the widening of the King Georges Interchange, which according to Westconnex's own figures will leave the intersection at the worst Level of Service (F). We have engaged with every part of the process. At a landscape review meeting some months back, AECOM Landscape Designer (Frank) advised residents that hundreds of metres of wall

would remain bare because it is easier for maintenance crews to inspect. When we showed him evidence lifted from RMS's own *Urban Landscape Design Principles* on how to deal with pinch points, we were later advised that there are now '*new WestConnex Urban Design Principles*'.

When we questioned why the Cooloongatta Rd bridge section would contain transparent walls, we were told it was to protect cyclists. When we could find no reference to this in any of the cyclist safety guideline documents we were referred to, we were told that it was a '*new WestConnex Safety Guideline*' criteria. Unfortunately, it wasn't available to be shared with the public. There is so much material that's not shared with the public!

One could be forgiven for thinking WestConnex are making it up as they go along.

The picture below is near the Cooloongatta Rd. Bridge. It's an example of native plantings successfully used in legacy M5 to improve the visual harshness of a concrete noise wall in a narrow space. These shrubs reached the top of the wall, just prior to being destroyed by in September 2015. The new plan for this section is transparent noise walls. Community backlash, including the involvement of local MPs, have forced WestConnex to reduce the length to 12 metres, down from the original 28 metres. We want concrete, as transparent noise walls for the benefit of the M5 motorist is unreasonable to the community. I also take exception that our request for Perspex to span the Cooloongatta Rd Bridge instead of the wire was rejected as an unreasonable expense to enable resident some noise attenuation.



Westconnex Framework for design – objectives or merely buzzwords?

- leading edge environmental responsiveness
- connectivity and legibility
- place making
- livability and urban renewal
- memorable identity and a safe, pleasant experience
- a new quality benchmark.

Let's review the New M5 Linear walk impacts against these objectives from a community perspective. We can then decide whether it is reasonable for the community to accept them.

Why does the M5 Linear Park matter?

The M5 Linear Park is an off-road shared path that runs parallel to the M5 East Motorway between Belmore Road, Riverwood and Bexley Road, Kingsgrove. The M5 Linear walk is used by hundreds of people each day.

The linear pathway is an important active transport artery that connects the community members to each other, as well as schools, shops and train stations. Older children can safely cycle to sports training or friends' homes without having to cross a road.

It's a lovely place to walk or cycle aiding both physical and psychological well-being, reducing stress and reconnecting with nature. Within a highly built urban environment, such as at Beverly Hills, you highly value our remnant of natural bushland and plantings that complement it.

Now unbelievably, much of this natural and planted landscape along our linear walk – including the critically endangered Cooks River Clay Plain Scrub Forest – is planned for destruction.

WestCONnex designers have taken the opportunity with their noise wall design to enhance the motorist experience. 1200 metres of transparent noise walls to the north and 700 metres to the south would provide drivers with views across the golf course, Beverly Grove Park and Tallawalla St. Park. From the walker's perspective, almost two kilometres of our pathway would overlook lanes of motorway from behind a plastic wall.

This design is neither reasonable nor moral for our community to accept.

M5 Linear walk – Cooks River Clay scrub forest. Beverly Hills North circa 2015



The above scene would be replaced by a transparent noise wall allowing the walker a view of 10 lanes of motorway. An artistic impression below. Fancy walking here?



The photo below is the Southern side of the M5 Linear Walk west of Tallawalla Street. This is near WestCONnex's proposed location for an unfiltered exhaust stack and a motorway operations complex and tunnel portals.



This section of our walkway will be replaced by a uniform and monotonous landscape design (pictured below). The human brain is hardwired to appreciate the diversity, the complexity and the changing form of our environment, whether built or natural.

A dominant feature in this landscape would be a 33 metre tall unfiltered exhaust stack and a motorway complex. This ‘chimney’ stack will spew concentrated toxins from a 9 km tunnel – a reminder to all us walkers and cyclists of the constant serious threat to our health.

The enjoyment of walkers would be further marred by high noise. The tunnel portals require noisy industrial size fans to manage vehicle emissions which would add to the ever present high traffic noise.

An unfiltered exhaust stack in the valley of Kingsgrove is not reasonable for our community and should not be accepted.



Figure 21 Indicative maintenance facility at Kingsgrove perspective B

Beverly Grove Park

Beverly Grove Park is a peaceful environment except for raucous birds delighting the community at dusk and the laughter of children at play. It's a quiet haven from traffic, protected by a noise mound. But the park was not always like this. After the first M5, it took years before the soil regenerated enough to support vegetation. Today, trees have just reached the sufficient maturity to support native fauna. If left alone they would grow a lot more, creating more shade and cooling.

WestConnex would acquisition the whole park for a construction compound:

- Hoarding (four metres high)
- Temporary noise barriers (around 2.5 metres high)
- Car parking
- Tunnel shaft within an acoustic spoil shed and associated haulage
- Site offices and crib area
- Storage areas
- Access between the northern and southern side for construction traffic via the existing Kindilan Underpass
- Sedimentation pond

Tunnelling works will be conducted 24 hours per day. Heavy truck movements would transport tunnel spoil (including asbestos) past hundreds of homes and two schools via Kingsgrove and Moorefields Roads. Residents would have to endure a truck movement every minute, 24 hours per day.

It's not reasonable for a community to accept such volumes of heavy truck movements through its residential streets.

It's not reasonable for any community to accept the standards of asbestos removal as witnessed at the Alexandria Landfill at St Peters.

Beverly Grove Park – North.



After 4 years of construction, **10.7 hectares of our Beverly Grove Park would be retained for the M5**, with only 2.6 hectares returned to the community. The below diagram shows the proposed rehabilitation. Note the transparent noise walls and the view of the unfiltered

exhaust stack in the valley – and the minimal plantings that even after 10 years fail to obscure the noise walls.

The drawing depth indicating size of the park is questionable.



Figure 6-54 Photomontage showing the change to view from the end of Glamis Street at project completion (opening)

Artists impression of Beverly Park later. Are people expected to feel good about walking and their children playing near an unfiltered ventilation stack?



Figure 6-55 Photomontage showing the change to view from the end of Glamis Street, ten years after opening

By the end of the 2020s, the park may be dotted with some trees again

It is not reasonable for a community to accept a landscaping design that benefits the motorist at significant expense of residents.

Now lets look at Beverly Grove Park South. This path will become an access road to the Motorway complex.



Kindlean Underpass

The community fought for this underpass in the legacy M5 project. It's key to community links. The current underpass is 26 metres long. Even at night, the underpass is short enough for pedestrians not to fear apprehensive. It is well lit with a clear view of the surroundings.

The WestConnex proposal would extend the underpass by a further 50 metres. In effect, it would **become a long 76 metre tunnel. Clear views of the surroundings and a sense of quick escape would be lost. This could lead to a sense of foreboding for those entering the tunnel. This may inhibit walkers, particularly women, from exercising in the evening.** Given these cumulative impacts on the M5 linear park, it's obvious that it will be used less and because it is used less, it will not be as safe.

The impact of these changes for residents who use the M5 Linear pathway should be assessed as 'High'. No mitigation is proposed in the EIS. It is therefore not reasonable for the community to accept the loss of their parks and social amenity.



Artist impression of a significantly longer tunnel



Westconnex's justification for proposed urban landscape designs

Rhe RMS and Westconnex do not consider the cumulative impacts of road construction of the legacy M5 and the New M5 on our community in the EIS. This is disengenuous. They then justify even further destruction of our suburbs. Our environment becomes merely 'an already disturbed LGA'. This is not acceptable. To quote one of many examples, the EIS discusses the Motorway Operations Complex in the following way:

"The MOC2 shares a boundary with the M5 Linear Park. Although this narrow parkland is used for public recreation, the land is zoned SP2 Infrastructure and is closely associated with the M5 East Motorway, having been created as a legacy project for the construction of the motorway. The change within the MOC2 site (from public open space to the MOC2) does constitute a significant character change from the existing condition, but as the zoned SP2 Infrastructure, this change is (therefore) acceptable within the anticipated character of the site considering the current zoning. Using other areas within the M5 Linear Park as a benchmark, the narrowed pedestrian and cycle access around the edge of the MOC2 would not be out of character for this linear park."

Yes, there are instances where the amenity of the pathway is a low standard, such as behind Gareema Circuit heading to Kingsgrove Road (pictured below). Although these visually divisive sections do exist, the fact that they exist shouldn't then be used as the benchmark of 'the character' that provides the excuse to degrade the rest of our walkway and urban environment to the same low standard.

It is not reasonable for the community to accept such justifications for the destruction of the environment.

Location – M5 linear walk behind Gareema Circuit Business Park. Circa 2015. Example of sub-standard urban design that should never become a 'benchmark' of character.



Westconnex Framework – does it meet objectives?

The Westconnex Framework objectives are supposed to have been developed to create a project that best benefits road users and the community:

- leading edge environmental responsiveness
- connectivity and legibility

- place making
- livability and urban renewal
- memorable identity and a safe, pleasant experience
- a new quality benchmark.

Let's revisit these objectives in light of the impacts.

The loss of the Cooks River Clay Plain Scrub Forest

The new M5 tunnel from King Georges Rd to St Peters will destroy 1.4 of 1.87 hectares of critically endangered Cooks River Clay Plain Scrub Forest. This was a condition of approval for the legacy M5. So precious is this woodland that it is protected by a fence. According to the EIS, WestCONnex has not been able to locate a 'like-for-like' to offset the loss. Instead, the EIS has deliberately adopted language that suggests this forest is 'insignificant' and has 'low long term viability'. In reality, it is a healthy stunning forest.

It is not reasonable for the wider community to accept that although there are no appropriate offsets for significant impacts on biodiversity, WestCONnex should be permitted to destroy a critically endangered bushland in its path.

The loss of tree canopy

WestConnex plans to expose almost 2km of the pathway to transparent noise walls. Minimal revegetation is planned as the aim is to provide motorists with perspective and pleasant views across the park. The presence of a prominent new structure, a 33 metre high unfiltered exhaust stack, will continually remind residents that they are breathing dangerous pollutants.

It is not reasonable for a community to accept that priority is given to motorists at the expense of residents.

Loss of safety

The current M5 Linear Park provides a pleasurable walk for most of the journey. The WestCONnex proposal will be significantly reduce its size. Many trees will be destroyed and replaced with views of a 10 lane motorway. The enjoyment of this walkway will be significantly diminished. The current level of patronage makes this walkway safe. The loss in amenity will result in less patronage.

It is not reasonable for a community to accept a loss of safety when exercising or visiting shops, schools and train stations.

Conclusion

I strongly reject and urge others to reject the new M5 and the entire WestConnex project on the grounds that the NSW Government is rushing ahead without forethought or care for the consequences of a project. I believe that the project will destroy much of what we value and will be a substantial waste of public money.

I object to the fact that the **cumulative impacts of motorways are not assessed**. The impacts resulting from the legacy M5 combined with the new M5 should have been considered in the EIS.

It is unreasonable to ask the same community – within 15 years – to go through construction and loss again.

I further object to WestConnex community liaison staff **concealing information from residents**. The KGR M5 Interchange EIS stated that noise walls will be reinstated in their current form.

Westconnex have never properly disclosed that their plans include hundreds of metres of transparent walls to benefit the driver experience and perspective. It is indeed shocking that almost 2km of our walls will be plastic. **That is not reasonable for a community to accept.**

In considering this whole project, **never forget that** the communities of **Beverly Hills, Kingsgrove, Bexley North, Earlwood and Arncliffe** lived through years of construction for the first M5 circa 2001, (Legacy M5) and have been leaving with its impacts ever since.

There are far better solutions to transport people and freight. It's called Public Transport. It is less divisive on a community (apart from the fact you pull down 100 yo trees rather than upset the Racecourse development plans). It is more efficient and better for the environment.

We need planners in our city to be innovative in their approach to addressing congestion. Not a 1950's approach that advanced cities discarded decades ago.

I realise that the Department of Planning is under a lot of pressure to approve the WestConnex project. I urge you to do the right thing for Sydney and our future. Reject is the only option.