



**October 29, 2015**

## **HABERFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL P&C SUBMISSION**

### **TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

On behalf of the Haberfield Public School Parents & Citizens Association, I make the following submission to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) exhibition for the WestConnex M4 East Tunnel Project (Project) (SSI 6307):

The parents and community members that make up the P&C at Haberfield Public School object to the WestConnex development. We do not believe this is an efficient use of \$15.4 billion of taxpayers' funds, because we do not believe it will lead to the congestion improvements promoted by the State Government and the WestConnex Delivery Authority (now Sydney Motorway Corporation). We are deeply troubled that the State Government has ignored the community by signing contracts to build this road before releasing this EIS, the full business case, or obtaining planning approval – this is a reprehensible lack of transparency and proper procedure. Without seeing the business case the community has no way of knowing what other alternatives were considered and what their associated costs were. We are also troubled that the 'consultation' with the community has primarily been done in a way that disempowers the community from feeling like they can influence the outcome.

The Project will have a devastating impact on the Inner West and particularly on our communities of Ashfield and Haberfield. Ashfield is one of the most densely populated communities in Sydney and Haberfield has great historical significance, therefore the decision to proceed is all the more bewildering. As one parent said at a recent WestConnex information night held at our school, we feel Haberfield Public School is at the centre of a "toxic triangle" of pollution stack and portals under the current WestConnex plans. On top of that, we will have four construction zones within several hundred metres of the school operating for at least three years. Our school draws more than 60 per cent of its students from the Ashfield side of Parramatta Road and the Five Dock side of Wattle St – turning both roads into 10-lane motorways will literally carve two giant holes through the middle of our community.

We also do not believe that our concerns about WestConnex have been adequately conveyed in the EIS. While it acknowledges that we have concerns about the Project and have requested mitigation measures, it does not convey the breadth of the issues we have raised in meetings with WestConnex representatives at all satisfactorily. Below we have outlined our concerns for our children's health and safety and the impact on our community, plus made suggestions to address them.

### **AIR QUALITY**

At the information night at our school attended by WestConnex representatives, we were told the proposed location for the eastern ventilation stack is "optimum". It feels far from optimum to our community. The Haberfield P&C is not satisfied by the EIS's suggestion that the increase in emissions will be negligible, and we are concerned that our children's health



will suffer from vehicle emissions from tens of thousands of cars being dispersed near our school from the pollution stack opposite the Bunnings site. We request the following action:

- Install an air quality monitoring station at the school or very close by well before the M4 East tunnel begins operation to take baseline measurements of pollution, including PM2.5 and all emissions for which there are air quality standards.
- Leave the monitoring station operating after the M4 East tunnel opens to monitor emissions at the school. We request this data be provided frequently to the school and the P&C and that action is taken immediately if there is a measurable impact on pollution levels.
- Filter the ventilation stack. If you can spend \$15.4 billion on a road to reduce travel times by just six minutes, you can afford to spend the additional money required to ensure the vast majority of pollution is not released into this densely-populated neighbourhood.
- Consider relocating the stack to a topographically higher point further west along Parramatta Road where emissions will be released higher into the atmosphere. The stack should be away from schools, childcare centres and retirement homes so the most vulnerable members of the community are not exposed to increased levels of pollution.
- Increase the height of the ventilation stack to reduce the impact of emissions on the local area and increase the likelihood that emissions will be dispersed more widely.

#### **NOISE AND DUST:**

The Haberfield P&C is concerned that our children's learning and play at school will be disrupted by noise generated during construction by heavy machinery and vehicles operating close to the school. We note that the school site (NCA19 in the Noise and Vibration report) is expected to have "high worst-case NML exceedances during the daytime" from construction and demolition work. We request the following action:

- Conduct a noise assessment at Haberfield Public School before construction begins and execute noise mitigation measures. This may take the form of double glazing of windows (and consequent installation of air conditioning) in classrooms. These mitigation measures must take place before construction begins. We also request compensation for the additional electricity costs associated with running the air conditioning because windows cannot be opened.
- Set up a noise monitoring station at Haberfield Public School so levels are monitored during construction. This data must be made available frequently to the school and the P&C.
- Amend work schedules as required so that students' learning and play is not affected by noise. This may include regular consultation with the school to ensure noise is reduced during, for instance, exams, music rehearsals, school assemblies and lunch/recess when students are outside.
- Immediately reduce noise at the construction sites if the school principal or senior staff contact authorities to complain of disruption to students and teachers.
- Ensure dust generated by construction activities and vehicle movements is limited and respond immediately by ceasing construction if notified that children playing outside at school are affected by dust in the air.

#### **TRAFFIC – DURING CONSTRUCTION AND WHEN TUNNELS ARE OPERATING**

The Haberfield P&C is greatly concerned that our children's safety will be put at risk by changed traffic behaviours as a result of WestConnex during construction and when the



tunnels open. For instance, we understand the pedestrian overpass at the corner of Bland St and Parramatta Rd will close for a period during construction – this is used by many students and parents to get safely to and from our school. We note also that the Brescia property at that intersection will be a major construction site, with heavy vehicles departing the site on to Bland St – a narrow and congested road at the best of times. Hundreds of heavy vehicles will use this and other intersections used by our students: for instance, the EIS reports that 80 trucks will use the Wattle St/Parramatta Rd intersection between 7.30am and 8.30am alone. Rat-running in local streets is likely to increase as drivers avoid using the tollways – motorists already use the streets of Haberfield and Leichhardt to avoid using the City West Link. On top of all this, many of the local intersections are expected to remain at Level F following construction, which is another outcome that leads us to question the efficiency of the whole WestConnex project.

We request the following action:

#### Before construction begins

- Take base-level data on traffic volumes on the following Haberfield streets:
  - Dalhousie (between Parramatta Rd and Ramsay St), Rogers, Chandos, Bland, Alt, Walker, and Ramsay (before and after the Haberfield shopping area, and also between Marion and Sloane Streets).
  - On Denman Ave outside Haberfield Public School.
- Take base-level data on traffic volumes on the following Ashfield streets:
  - Church, Frederick, Elizabeth, Alt, Julia and Bland Streets
- Monitor the above streets in Haberfield and Ashfield during construction and for a period of at least 12 months after construction.
- If any streets exceed acceptable increases, take steps to return the streets to acceptable levels (eg blocking access, speed bumps) and consider pedestrian safety measures (eg crossing, bridges).

#### During construction

- For the whole period of the closure of the southern footpath on Parramatta Rd between Chandos and Bland Sts, have lollipop people in attendance at the Dalhousie St/Ashfield Park traffic lights to ensure those children who walk to school alone are guided across Parramatta Rd safely. The lollipop people must be present at these lights for both the morning & afternoon 'school zone' times.
- For the whole period that the Bland St overpass is unable to be used, have lollipop people be present at the Parramatta Rd/Bland St traffic lights (both to cross Bland from the east and to cross Parramatta Rd) for the morning & afternoon 'school zone' times.
- Install traffic lights at the corner of Alt St and Parramatta Road for at least the construction phase, to provide a crossing away from Bland St where there will be heavy truck movements. This may also require the installation of traffic lights at Church St/Alt St, as that intersection is already busy and difficult to negotiate because of poor sightlines.
- That any truck movements made during morning & afternoon school zone times are made under the supervision of a 'spotter' (i.e. a person on the ground whose job it is to be the driver's 'eyes & ears' as visibility from a high cab is often poor), who ensures the safe passage of the children on the footpaths of and when crossing Bland St, Wattle St and Parramatta Rd.



- Declare a quarantine zone at an agreed distance around the school to ensure construction staff's parked vehicles do not restrict parking for parents in the streets near the school during pick-up and drop-off times.

## **PEDESTRIAN/CYCLIST INITIATIVES**

One of the stated priorities of this project is to "Create opportunities for urban revitalisation, improved liveability, and public and active transport (walking and cycling) improvements along and around Parramatta Road". After reading the EIS and hearing the WestConnex representatives at our school's information night, we see no evidence of such improvements in our community. Indeed, when raised at our meeting, your representatives seemed surprised that we would request such improvements! It is a massive missed opportunity not to leave us with better connections for active transport between Haberfield, Ashfield and Five Dock after dividing us even further with massive roads and tunnels.

We request the following action:

- Install additional pedestrian/cyclist crossings between Haberfield and Ashfield as a permanent positive legacy of the Project. We would love to see these be innovative in design – an overpass nearer to Ashfield Park/Orpington St, for instance, that is exciting to look at as well as useful for our community. The Alt St crossing suggested above could also remain. For reference, we look at Parramatta Road in Camperdown where there are many crossings at intersections that are phased well and do not impede traffic, while allowing locals to cross easily and safely.
- Similarly, additional crossings should be installed over Wattle St/City West Link, ie at Waratah St linking to Timbrell Park and/or at Ramsay St.
- The existing Bland St overpass could be improved in design. While we appreciate the lifts, they regularly break down forcing cyclists, parents with prams and children with scooters to navigate the steps. Consider building ramps to access the overpass.

## **SOCIAL IMPACT**

This Project is already having a significant and direct social impact on our school community. Many families have been forced to leave their homes, and some of them will be unable to remain at the school because the compensation they receive does not allow them to rent or buy in the neighbourhood in future. This is devastating for them, and the children and adults who have become their friends through school. Many heritage homes and buildings will be demolished, to be replaced by an ugly and enormous ventilation stack and widened roads. These will be a constant reminder of the loss of community wrought by this Project. We do not feel the EIS adequately acknowledges or compensates us for this impact.

We request the following action:

- Provide a fund for the Ashfield and Haberfield community (perhaps through Ashfield Council) to fund positive community initiatives for the next 10 years.
- Provide a fund for Haberfield Public School to address the unexpected consequences of the construction and the subsequent road.
- Set a specific quota for new trees and other planting in the community, particularly in the most affected areas (Parramatta Road at and beyond the tunnel exit, Walker Ave around the stack and other tunnel buildings, City West link at and beyond the tunnel exit).



- Require that property used for construction sites is turned into local parks or for other community benefit following the tunnels' opening, rather than being used for high-rise housing.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

- We request and expect that the Haberfield P&C and/or Haberfield Public School Principal will hold a seat on the community consultative committee that will be established as part of this Project.
- We note the lack of materials produced in languages other than English as part of the 'community consultation' – we have a large Mandarin-speaking community who were unable to read the EIS because it was not provided in other languages. In a multicultural city such as Sydney, this is extremely poor and discriminatory practice.
- We protest that the EIS submission period was too short to allow all affected parties to read and consider the 5000-page EIS and consult adequately. Further, we believe the EIS was structured in a way that made it extremely difficult to navigate and understand.

In closing, we would like to thank the WestConnex representatives who attended our school information night on October 12. Their presentation and responses to our questions provided us all with additional information about the Project.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this submission and our many objections to the WestConnex proposal. We look forward to seeing all of our concerns addressed in your response.

Yours sincerely

Sherrill Nixon

Vice-President  
Haberfield Public School P&C Association