

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I would like to make the following submission to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) exhibition for the WestConnex M4 East Tunnel Project (Project) (SSI 6307):

I am a resident of Ashfield with two children who attend Haberfield Primary School and The Infants' Home Day Care Centre. I have many concerns about the impact of the WestConnex M4 East Tunnel Project on the suburbs of Ashfield and Haberfield. I will focus this submission on the two areas of greatest concern to myself and my family:

- Pedestrian safety and access around the tunnel portals, and
- Mitigation of traffic on Parramatta Rd with the increase of active and public transport

I understand that a growing city needs major infrastructure works, I agree that Parramatta Rd is currently operating above capacity, the commute from western Sydney is arduous and there are too many trucks on surface roads. I also understand that with projects of this magnitude, some communities must experience upheaval and change. However, Ashfield and Haberfield will be significantly and permanently changed by this project, and, as it stands now - with no real benefit to local residents. I suggest that WestConnex and the NSW Government carefully consider adding a few positive changes so that inner west residents can benefit from these major works as well as those in the transport industry and those who commute from the greater west.

I attended the community consultation meeting at Haberfield Primary on October 12 and learned about all of the state of the art, world class, forward thinking, future-proof design and technology going into the WestConnex tunnels. I would like to invite WestConnex and the NSW Government to match that level of forward-thinking design and technology on the surface roads, particularly with regards to pedestrian, cycle and public transport access around the portals at Haberfield and Ashfield.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESS

At the community consultation meeting at Haberfield Primary on October 12, WestConnex carefully explained how all existing pedestrian crossings would be maintained during construction, and remain into the future as they currently exist.

I would suggest that, rather than merely maintaining pedestrian crossings, this major infrastructure project for "Tomorrow's Sydney" could be seen as an opportunity to actually improve pedestrian safety in the area.

Firstly, the Dalhousie St crossing of Parramatta Rd is already quite a dangerous crossing, and it will be much more heavily used - especially by school children - during the four years of construction as the Bland St pedestrian bridge will be inaccessible from the southern side of Parramatta Rd for the duration of construction.

Once the tunnels are open, it will be the first pedestrian crossing encountered by traffic exiting the city-bound tunnel.

Similarly, many children walk to and from school along Ramsay St, crossing Wattle St which is already a major thoroughfare. This crossing will become a serious pedestrian hazard during the four years of construction and almost double in width once the project is complete.

I propose that pedestrian bridges be built at both of these intersections - at the beginning of construction - to dramatically improve pedestrian safety and access both during construction and into the future.

MITIGATION OF TRAFFIC ON PARRAMATTA RD – INCREASE OF ACTIVE AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

I would also like to address the treatment of Parramatta Rd between Homebush and Ashfield after the tunnels are built. I would like to see concrete plans for reducing the amount of traffic on the surface road and giving over much of the road space to bus and bicycle lanes.

According to the Project Benefits Fact Sheet distributed by WestConnex, the Project will “Enable faster and more regular bus services along Parramatta Rd” and will provide “future provision of rapid public transport services and bus lanes along Parramatta Road”. However, at the community consultation meeting at Haberfield Primary on October 12, WestConnex representatives could not answer even the most basic questions about those “future provisions” and there seems to be very little in the way of specific plans to increase public transport along Parramatta Rd.

Like many Ashfield and Haberfield residents, I am concerned that if no effort is made to mitigate traffic along Parramatta Rd after the tunnels are complete, traffic will simply double as more commuters will choose to take advantage of the quicker drive time to the city.

A common explanation of this phenomenon is that traffic behaves like a gas - it expands to fill the available space - if it is made easier to drive, more people will drive.

“induced traffic”, whereby new road facilities generate completely new trips that were never predicted rather than freeing up the road system for the existing traffic. Research is also showing conclusively that, just as new roads induce new traffic, removing road space can cause traffic to dissolve or disappear. It suggests that traffic does not behave like a “liquid” and maintain a constant “volume” but, rather, behaves more like a “gas” that expands and contracts to fill the space provided for it. ¹

¹ Jeffrey R Kenworthy. Professor in Sustainable Cities at the Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy at Murdoch University in Perth. From his paper: The eco-city: ten key transport and planning dimensions for sustainable city development.

If, however, an approach is taken which is similar to the treatment of Epping Rd at Lane Cove, where - once the Lane Cove tunnel was complete - traffic along the surface road was heavily mitigated and space given over to bus and cycle lanes. This strongly encouraged through traffic to use the tunnel and the surface road was given over to active transport, public transport and local traffic. I feel this is a great model which WestConnex and the NSW Government could look to as an example of how to re-furnish Parramatta Rd once the tunnels are complete. And I would like to see concrete plans to do so, rather than vague statements such as "will enable" and "future provision".

In summary, I request the following actions:

- permanent pedestrian bridges at Dalhousie St crossing Parramatta Rd and Ramsay St crossing Wattle St to be built BEFORE construction begins on the tunnels to protect pedestrian and cycle access around the portals both during the four years of construction and into the future.
- comprehensive plans to be released showing how traffic will be mitigated along Parramatta Rd between Homebush and Ashfield after the tunnels are complete, to direct through traffic to use the tunnels rather than surface roads and dedicate more space on the surface road to bus and cycle lanes.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this submission. I look forward to seeing my concerns addressed in your response.

Yours sincerely,

Juliet Young
Ashfield resident.