

Submission: SSI 6307 WestConnex M4 East EIS

I am writing to express my strong objection to the SSI 6307 WestConnex M4 East EIS and to formally request a response to my concerns.

In regards to this WestConnex M4 East proposal, I strongly object to the following points, and I ask you to respond to each in your reply:

- I strongly object to the wholesale destruction of heritage homes and precincts within the **Haberfield Conservation Area** and the impact of the construction of the tunnel, ramps and exits in Haberfield.

The EIS itself has found that the impact on Haberfield and the Haberfield Conservation from the M4East will be significant and not reasonably able to be mitigated. Haberfield and the Haberfield Conservation Area are of national significance as a rare conserved Federation garden suburb. The impact of the M4East on Haberfield is not acceptable, particularly for a project that will not resolve but add to Sydney's traffic congestion.

- I strongly object to the wholesale destruction of homes and precincts within Haberfield and other inner west communities with the attendant social, health and economic impacts, which are not acceptable.
- I strongly object to their being no disclosure in the M4East plans or the EIS, nor any analysis or review in the EIS of the works and connections at Haberfield for the future **Stage 3 of WestConnex**, nor of the location for the Stage 3 tunnel, yet the EIS recommends these connections and works be done as part of Stage 1/2 to save further later substantial impact on Haberfield from the subsequent works. This represents a complete lack of transparency and failure to disclose where these works and the Stage 3 tunnel are to be located- somewhere beneath the residential homes of Haberfield, Leichhardt and Annandale.
- I object that if **Stage 3 does** not proceed however, the EIS discloses and other traffic commentators predict, that the inner west of Sydney will be condemned to *“rat running through suburban streets”* (Duncan Gay prior to March 2015 election) , yet the viability of Stage 3 must be highly questionable, no funding having been allocated and other such tunnels such as the Cross City Tunnel, being commercially unviable.
- I strongly object to AECOM being paid millions of dollars of public funds to play the key role in the EIS for the M4 East. AECOM has been awarded other WestConnex contracts that give it a huge vested interest in the project going ahead, and this is demonstrated by the lack of independence and superficial analyses that characterise this EIS. In addition, AECOM has been sued for being negligent in relation to its past traffic studies, and has already paid more than \$250m in settlement costs.

The conflict of interest of AECOM in participating in the EIS is unacceptable and further indicative of the complete failure of proper process characterised by the WestConnex project.

- I strongly object to having each section of the WestConnex assessed separately. Vague rationales for the whole project are used to justify the serious negative impacts of each stage. Projects such as the Southern motorway F8, which are not even at a planning stage, are included in the argument for the project without explanation.
- I strongly object to the failure to consider total negative impacts against the total claimed positive aspects. While the M4 East EIS repeatedly makes references to the positive impact of the entire WestConnex when arguing for the project, it fails to consider the negative impacts of the whole project – such as loss of housing, heritage and biodiversity.
- I strongly object to the failure to provide enough data to allow independent experts to verify the M4 East EIS's traffic analysis. For example, a detailed study undertaken by SGS Economics & Planning for the City of Sydney concluded that WestConnex would make traffic worse on Parramatta Rd, Victoria St and many local roads. The M4 East EIS claims it will improve traffic, but offers very little data that would allow experts to objectively assess this analysis.
- I strongly object to spending \$15.4 billion for small savings that will not benefit most commuters. Instead of spending this amount of money to benefit a very small percentage of drivers in Sydney, and cut just one minute off overall road network traffic speeds, the NSW Government should be investing in public transport, traffic management solutions, and regional city centres to address traffic congestion and boost NSW's economic prosperity in the long term.
- I strongly object to the poor analysis of alternatives undertaken in the M4 East EIS. This section of the EIS is superficial and amounts to nothing more than a roundabout way of saying that the M4East tunnel project is preferred by WestConnex.
- I strongly object to the huge impact of the flow of cars and trucks out of tunnel exits, including from the tunnel exits on Ramsey and Waratah streets Haberfield. This will gridlock local roads throughout the Inner West. Duncan Gay before the March 2015 election admitted that if Stage 3 does not proceed, 120,000 cars per day will be *"spewed into the streets of Newtown, Balmain, Leichhardt and Eskville"*. He failed to mention Haberfield. The EIS also admits the additional traffic on local roads if Stage 3 does not eventuate.
- I strongly object to hundreds of residents being forced from their homes and businesses for the M4 East, and the failure of the EIS to assess the social impacts of this. Forcibly acquiring and destroying over 200 homes and businesses will result in massive social disruption in communities. There have been numerous reports of homeowners and tenants being inadequately compensated for the loss of their properties. These acquisitions were in motion before the EIS was even completed, yet the EIS Social Impact study failed to do any direct research on the impact of forced acquisitions on residents.

- I strongly object to the health risk and air quality analysis, which fails to assess the true impact of the M4 East. The claim is even made that WestConnex will improve local air quality – which will surely make it the first motorway in history to do so.
- I strongly object to the total inadequacy of the M4 East biodiversity assessment. This ‘analysis’ is based on insufficient studies. No attempt is made to assess cumulative impacts of the entire WestConnex project on loss of open space, gardens and other vegetation.
- I strongly object to the failure of WestConnex consultants to directly consult with business owners. Local business owners were not approached by WestConnex about the impact the M4 East would have on their livelihoods, despite the fact that many stand to see their businesses destroyed as thriving streets precincts are drowned in traffic.

I also object to the entire WestConnex for a number of reasons.

1. Global experience and research has shown conclusively that these kinds of toll road mega-projects are hugely expensive and counterproductive. WestConnex will increase air pollution and traffic, and expose NSW taxpayers to unacceptably high levels of financial risk. It is not a long-term solution to Sydney's congestion problem.
2. 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 and shows a complete lack of due process.
3. Failure to abide by the Major Projects Assurance Framework and employ best practice governance from project inception has also greatly reduced community confidence in WestConnex, including the M4 East EIS. The Community is being asked to comment on an EIS that is deficient in analysis of project justification.
4. A condition of consent for the M4 East should include adherence to the NSW Government's Major Projects Assurance Framework. Vital gateway reviews which should have been undertaken before the preparation of the EIS (and certainly before awarding construction contracts) should be commissioned, completed and made publicly available before any further approvals are issued.

I therefore call on the Minister for Planning to reject this proposal on grounds including that:

- The impact on Haberfield and the Haberfield Conservation Area, a conserved jewel within Australia of national importance, cannot be justified;
- The impact on other inner west communities of Sydney for the saving of maybe a few minutes in commute time from the western suburbs of Sydney cannot be justified;
- Even the M4 East's inadequate traffic analysis shows that WestConnex will be at capacity by 2031;

- AECOM has not even met the basic Planning Secretary's requirements in its assessment; and
- This is an outdated project that is not consistent with current trends in thinking about public transport, urban planning and liveability of cities.

I recognise there is pressure on several NSW Departments, including Planning and Environment, to approve this project. I remind public servants of their obligation to the public and to the potential social, health and economic costs of spending \$15.4 billion on WestConnex when it provides no solution to Sydney's transport needs.

I call on the Minister to reject the proposal for the WestConnex M4 East and the WestConnex.