

## Westconnex Submission – 2 Nov 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing regarding the proposed Westconnex M4 East Tunnel Project (Project) (SSI 6307).

I have serious concerns regarding this project in its current proposed form. I believe the project is based on a flawed premise and must be paused to allow proper and diligent consideration and community consultation to address the underlying issue to bring about a more effective (and equitable) outcome.

Firstly, the Project is but one option, yet the NSW Government has leaped to the conclusion that this is the only viable option. This is patently NOT the case, as there are a variety of (cheaper) alternatives available that could be implemented that would yield equal or better outcomes. As this option is an expensive, socially disruptive option, it is surprising that the Project has been allowed to progress in light of less divisive alternatives being considered by the wider community.

Secondly, the Project only seeks to treat the symptom (road congestion) rather than be part of a holistic response to the underlying cause. As a result, it will have a limited impact over the medium-to-long term. The Project's own modelling indicates that there will be no material benefit for the local communities in terms of road traffic on local roads and, if anything, local road traffic will only worsen.

Thirdly, this lack of effectiveness over the medium-to-long term brings into question the efficacy of the treatment and allocation of resources for the Project. The \$15.4 billion funding for the Project could be better and more effectively used to address the underlying issue and better treat the symptoms.

Fourthly, the Project reeks of **hubris** with the assumption that it is a *fait accompli*. The Project as it has been executed violates the fundamental tenants of both the free market and democracy – namely, **transparency** and **full information**. The NSW Government has ignored the community by signing contracts to build this road before releasing this EIS, the full business case or obtaining planning approval – which reflect a reprehensible lack of transparency and proper procedure required for good governance and effective markets. Without seeing the business case and options available, the community has no way of knowing what other alternatives were considered and what their associated costs were. As a former merchant banker, the Premier would be well versed with many of these concepts, so it is surprising that these have been conveniently overlooked for a project of this magnitude.

Fifthly, I am troubled by the 'consultation' with the community. This process has primarily been done in a way that disempowers the community from feeling like they can influence the outcome, which flows from the apparent *fait accompli* perception noted in point four. **True** community consultation would involve the community at the **start** of the process, which has not happened in this case.

Sixthly, the Project will have a devastating impact on the Inner West, and particularly on the communities of Ashfield and Haberfield, which affects me directly. 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 Haberfield school, the feeling is one of Haberfield Public School (HPS) being at the centre of a “toxic triangle” of pollution stack and portals under the current WestConnex plans. We now have serious concerns what this could mean for our child who will be attending HPS.

Additionally, there will be four construction zones within several hundred metres of the school operating for at least three years. As HPS 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 the community.

Seventhly, I do not believe that the community’s concerns about WestConnex have been adequately conveyed in the EIS. There are issues concerning:

- the location and height of the ventilation shafts, especially with regard to HPS, as relocating the stack to a topographically higher point further west along Parramatta Road would result in emissions being released higher into the atmosphere and achieving greater dispersal (i.e. lower concentrations), especially if it was also taller;
- the lack of filtration on the ventilation stacks – if spending \$15.4 billion on a roadway to save six minutes of travel time, is the minor cost increase for better air quality coming out of the stack a significant burden to bear? Given the recent scientific advances in understanding the negative impact of air pollution on health and mortality, *is the NSW Government truly saying that the health of local residents is not worth considering?*;
- noise and dust from construction for HPS students that will detrimentally impact learning due to the proximity of construction and machinery movements;
- the frequency of heavy-truck movements during school hours that raise safety issues.

Given the inability of relocating HPS, much greater attention to reducing and mitigating detrimental influences must be taken.

Eighthly, one 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”. It is evident from the EIS and statements by WestConnex representatives at the HPS information night that there is no evidence of such improvements planned for our community. Forsooth, when raised at the HPS meeting, the Westconnex representatives seemed surprised that the community would request such improvements.

Ninthly, the Project is already having a significant and direct social impact on our local community. Many families have been forced to leave their homes, and some

of them will be unable to remain at HPS 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. The community does not feel the EIS adequately acknowledges or compensates it for this impact.

In conclusion, the Project in its current form is inappropriate, represents an abrogation of the need for proper community consultation and process, lacks transparency, fails to holistically address underlying issues and merely seeks to provide temporary relief to symptoms, as well as failing to adequately consider the health, safety and learning-disruption effects for Haberfield Public School. The NSW Government needs to pause the Project and begin again an effective community-consultation process that considers all options, not just the Project.

Sincerely,

Dr Philip J. Rosenberger III