

I write to submit in relation to the Environmental Impact Statement for the WestConnex M4 East project. I am opposed to both the M4 East project and all other proposed stages of WestConnex.

I oppose the project on the grounds that it will have a significant detrimental impact on the health and well being of my family, our community and our environment without delivering measureable improvement to the transport infrastructure of metropolitan Sydney as evidenced by the lack of a business case for the project.

## Community Perspective

I object to the WestConnex M4 East project as an Australian citizen and taxpayer, and a ratepayer of the Ashfield Municipal Council. I believe that the damage that will be caused by this project is far greater than any possible benefit. 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.

I object to \$15.4 billion being spent on WestConnex to benefit a very small percentage of drivers in Sydney (less than 1% of the NSW population each day), and cut just one minute off overall road network traffic speeds. The traffic projections in the current M4 East EIS show the tunnel at capacity by 2031. The project reaches capacity in the M4 East tunnel within eight years after project completion. Given that congestion levels are only likely to be reduced for a maximum ten years, at which point we would be back to where we are in 2015, there needs to be consideration of alternative ways to manage and reduce congestion. 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.

There are a number of significant reasons for my objection which I will cover under the sub-headings below.

## **Planning Process**

- I object to a review process in which each section of WestConnex is 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. The M4 East project contains no concrete proposals and funding for Stage 3 of WestConnex.
- I object to the planning and development of the M4East proposal that has been seriously compromised by the involvement of AECOM in so many aspects of the project. I 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.
- I object to the lack of transparency in the entire WestConnex process. Billions of dollars of contracts have been signed, approval assumed and work commenced prior to planning approval and any proper community engagement. There has been inadequate and conflicting information provided at EIS community sessions.
- I object to the short 55-day timeframe in which members of the community have been given to respond to the EIS for the M4 East. This document runs to nearly 5,000 pages, but the public was only given 55 days to respond. The Federal and NSW governments have called WestConnex the largest road infrastructure project in Australia's history. For such a major piece of infrastructure it has had a relatively short period of review.

- I object to this project proceeding when no business case for the project has been publicly released.
- I object to the validity of the Social Impacts Assessment (SIA) within the EIS because baseline information and much of the research material used was not collected independently. I object that much of the material and information used as a basis for the GHD SIA had been collected and supplied to the SIA team by WestConnex Delivery Authority. I object to this lack of independence of the SIA from the proponent of the project.
- I object that after the community 'consultation' regarding the 2013 concept plan there was no direct engagement with residents in the development of the SIA for the EIS of the preferred route released in 2015.
- I object that only residents whose homes were notified of acquisition in 2013 and 2015 were considered 'consulted' in relation to the SIA for the EIS.
- I object to the lack of attention by the SIA of the impacts on residents in Ashfield & Haberfield cause by trucks exiting into Bland St, Ashfield, from a construction site in the middle of a densely populated area.
- I 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.

### **Community Destruction**

- I object that 182 residential properties have or will be acquired for the project with a high number of residential properties to be acquired located in the Haberfield. Residents have been provided with little or no assistance in obtaining independent valuations or be empowered to negotiate a mutual agreement. Some residents have advised that offers are 20-50% below market values and

accordingly, residents have been unable to purchase a similar property within the garden suburb or surrounding area. Neither the Proponent nor the NSW State Government has adequately considered or compensated residents for this displacement

- I object to the failure of the EIS to assess the social impacts of these acquisitions. They will result in massive social disruption in communities. There have been numerous reports of homeowners and tenants being forced to move from their properties, after many generations have lived there. For example, I have spoken with Kim Sun about the acquisition of his home in Young St Strathfield. It is heartbreaking that Kim and his family have to suffer for this project, both economically and psychologically when individuals and construction companies are profiting from the building of this road.
- I object on the basis that this project will change the “face” of the area permanently due to the loss of local connectivity, as this will be severely compromised in the Haberfield and Ashfield areas. The unique/ niche Haberfield Village and surrounding businesses will be impacted by down turn in passing vehicular and foot traffic due to disruption caused by the Project. Ashfield and Haberfield are currently linked socially and economically, with many school children and shoppers walking, cycling or driving between the two areas every day. The Parramatta Road portal interchange between Bland Street and Ashfield Park is approximately 500m long with the north and south sides of Parramatta Road clearly being significantly separated from each other in this location. Approximately 250 metres along the south side will contain no buildings and so no street/road activation for pedestrian surveillance. In addition, there will no safe means of pedestrian crossing for approximately 655 metres between Dalhousie Street and Bland Street.
- I object that the project has not taken into account the unique culture of the area. Ashfield is culturally diverse, with over 44% of the population who speak a non-English language as compared to 32% of the population across Greater Sydney

(2011 census). The EIS and the consultation methodology for the Project is inadequate as it does not recognise this cultural diversity and does not include translations of the exhibition material in key languages to afford those with poor or no English speaking capabilities to respond to the public exhibition. The EIS indicates that local residents, business owners and bus passengers would be advised of planned construction activities and changes to bus stop locations during construction although there is no indication that such information will be made available in languages other than English.

### **Destruction of heritage.**

- I object to the wholesale destruction of heritage homes and precincts. The suburb of Haberfield has been managed by Council and the local community as a Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) for some forty years and this is valued by the local community. The preservation of heritage homes and streetscapes is the main reason that houses in Haberfield are considerably more expensive than across Parramatta Rd in Ashfield. In respect of the impacts on the Haberfield HCA, the EIS concludes:  
*“Although localised in the Section of the HCA around Wattle Street, Northcote and Wolseley Streets, the impact of the proposal on the heritage significance of the Haberfield HCA and individual heritage items within it would be significant and unable to be effectively mitigated”.*
- I object to the project’s plan within the Haberfield Heritage Conservation Area to demolish 53 properties for “new motorway infrastructure” including 11 heritage items and 29 contributory items and entailing the physical and visual loss of the buildings, their gardens, street trees and the streetscapes to which they contribute.
- I object to the potential damage to the condition, appearance and structural integrity of non-acquired homes within the Haberfield Heritage Conservation Area due to vibration, settlement and noise impacts.

- I object to changes to the frontage and access to “Yasmar”, the State heritage listed property fronting Parramatta Road. I object to the unsympathetic landscape proposals apply to the Yasmar frontage.
- I object that the Project does little to be complementary in building design with a 25 metre high ventilation facility, taller than the existing heritage-listed Peak Frean’s tower opposite and vastly more assertive in bulk and form.

## **Traffic**

- I object to the EIS’s failure to provide enough data to allow independent experts to verify its traffic analysis. The M4 East EIS claims it will improve traffic, but offers very little data that would allow experts to objectively assess this analysis. The Traffic and Transport Assessment does to contain enough information about the methodology, input data or assumptions for the forecasts to be independently verified.
- I object to the project on the basis that it seems that the only major attractor that is served by WestConnex is Sydney Airport and the claimed savings in travel times are unrealistic. According to the WDA spin, among the benefits that WestConnex delivered included reducing the travel time from Parramatta to the airport by 40 minutes and bypassing up to 52 sets of traffic lights. They failed to say that you can now avoid the 52 traffic lights now in 2015 by catching the train which takes 45 minutes from Parramatta to the airport. According to google maps it takes between 39 and 54 minutes to drive between Parramatta and the airport. The claim of a 40 minute saving seems heroic.
- I object that this project is not consistent with the NSW government’s Action for Transport 2010, released in 1998 to “redress the [then] current imbalance in the road and public transport system.” That Action Plan listed 21 projects to be completed or started by 2010. From that list, every road project was delivered but of the 16 public transport projects only four were completed. The inability for successive governments to deliver public transport projects has made Sydney

(particularly western Sydney) more car dependent. Building more roads has not had any lasting impact on road congestion.

- I object that this project does not satisfy the objections raised against the M4 East project when it was previously proposed in 2003/2004. What has changed since 2004 that now makes the M4 East economically viable with positive environmental impacts? The failure to release the business case further exacerbates the situation. The current M4 East project should not be approved without a full appraisal of the economic and environmental impacts of the proposal with particular reference to how the current proposal overcomes the previous concerns raised in 2004 that led to its abandonment.
- I object that the project does not deliver bus lanes along the length of the Parramatta Road until after 2031. The implementation of bus lanes is stated to be the main public transport initiative of WestConnex. The project fails to provide concrete proposals for public transport improvements, such as rapid transit bus lanes or light rail and cycleways along Parramatta Road.
- I object to the project on the basis that the traffic modelling appears to demonstrate that the Project is not utilised by one of the key target groups - residents of Western Sydney.
- I object that there are a number of significant flaws in the traffic modelling contained in the EIS and have listed some below:
  - The traffic, air quality, health and greenhouse modelling is based on the proposed M4 East project plus another uncommitted project to convert kerbside general traffic lanes on Parramatta Road to bus priority. With these additional bus lanes, the capacity of Parramatta Road would be significantly reduced and traffic volumes would fall accordingly, with drivers opting to use the M4 East tunnel instead. As such, the traffic volumes for the M4 East

tunnel have been dramatically overestimated, and the traffic volumes for Parramatta Road have been dramatically underestimated in the EIS.

- The model input data and assumptions have not been made available for independent verification. For example, the assumed toll prices have not been disclosed.
- The model ignores the impact of the project on the long-term transport decisions including the strong probability that the project will encourage more car ownership and more people to move further from work (sprawl) or work further from home, thereby increasing average travel distances/demand. The project will encourage firms to locate in locations further away from their labour supply/customers/suppliers than they otherwise would, thereby increasing travel distances/demand.
- The project will attract passengers away from public transport to road. As such, public transport patronage will be lower than it would be without the project. This could result in public transport service levels being cut, which will encourage further mode shift from public transport to road.
- Travel time and accessibility impacts for non-motorised modes (walk and bicycle) have not been modelled.
- The EIS has not modelled alternatives to meet the transport/accessibility needs of NSW's growing population, such as greater investment in public transport.
- The weekend period has not been modelled, despite current weekend traffic volumes being higher than weekday traffic volumes on many corridors.



- There is no sensitivity analysis in the Traffic and Transport Assessment. The effects of varying key assumptions (e.g., willingness to pay the M4 East toll) have not been disclosed.
- It is unclear whether the new 40,000 homes proposed in the *Draft Parramatta Road Urban Transformation Strategy* have been included in the transport modelling and if they have not they should be as they will result in significant changes to the modelling outputs;
- The traffic modelling show no long term or permanent improvements.

## **Pollution**

- I object to the health risk and air quality analysis, which fails to assess the true impact of the M4 East. There are serious human health impacts due to petrochemical vehicle emissions/smog, including:
  - i) Lung cancer,
  - ii) Asthma,
  - iii) Heart disease,
  - iv) Impaired lung development in children living near motorways/exhaust stacks.

Waterways contaminated with road runoff (heavy metals and carcinogens in brake and clutch dust, exhaust particulates etc.).

Noise pollution from traffic and its impacts on sleep.

Impacts on visual amenity (pollution stacks, concrete interchanges, concrete flyovers).
- I object that no predictions have been made in the EIS in regard to air quality due to the ventilation outlets in isolation – rather the model is predicated on averages across a much wider area;
- I object that the Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) does not consider the potentially different exposure profile for people who may be living above ground

in medium and high-rise apartments, with the air quality modelling projecting only ground level concentrations. Ashfield is already characterized as a high density area, with many apartments and the future development of the area includes increasing numbers of people inhabiting apartment buildings.

- I object that the Human Health Risk Assessment contains no detail as to how construction practices will ensure a negligible health effect on nearby residents from exposure to particulates during construction. For example drilling and grinding sandstone or other hard rock creates small biologically active silica particulates which have carcinogenic potential.
- I object that the EIS does not assess the impacts on air quality (and resulting health impacts) with the inclusion of filtration, or other pollutant reduction measures, in the tunnel exhaust stacks and consequently the potential benefit to human health of including filtration has not been objectively assessed.

### **Destruction of natural environment**

- I object to the fact that the project will result in the know removal of about 15.7 hectares of vegetation, comprising 12.9 hectares of planted trees and screening vegetation (mainly from alongside the M4) and about 2.8 hectares of grassland with scattered trees (such as from Cintra Park and Reg Coady Reserve).
- I 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 object to the project's likely effect on summer temperatures, due to the urban heat island effect produced by increased road surface and reduced natural vegetation.

- I object that the landscape proposal for a “Boulevard planting of large eucalypts” is completely foreign to Haberfield, which uses measured plantings of smaller species.
- I object that the Project will result in a major intervention or ‘cut out’ of the western heart of the historic garden suburb of Haberfield at Wattle Street. This ‘cut out’ will be approximately 780 metres long and approximately 53 metres at its widest point and the EIS concludes this is indeed a ‘high impact’ and does not fit in with the existing historic character of the area. In addition, the Parramatta Road interchange area will result in a large ‘cut out’ being approximately 500 metres long and approximately 60 metres at its widest point. The EIS suggests that the key ‘tool’ to mitigating the significant visual impacts of these interventions is to provide tree planting.
- I object to the plan for the area at the Wattle Street and Ramsay Street crossing to be hard edged, hard paved, narrow and therefore pedestrian unfriendly and dominated by traffic movements. Its significant width of approximately 65 metres will also result in long pedestrian crossing times.

## Personal Perspective

I live with my wife and two children at the corner of Julia and Bland St Ashfield. During the construction period, there will be severe impacts on my home, life and community. At the end of any construction, my home will be left standing 150 metres from the Parramatta Rd Ashfield/Haberfield interchange and 400 metres from the Stage 1 and Sage 3 tunnel ventilation stacks.

I object to the location of the Parramatta Rd interchange construction site on the corner of Bland St and Parramatta Rd, Ashfield – one block from my home. Prior to the release of the EIS, Ashfield Council was advised that no local roads would be used for construction vehicle access or egress although the project now proposes the use of Bland Street to exit the Parramatta Road site.

I object to the dangers likely to be caused by construction site traffic exiting onto Bland St, Ashfield to all road users and pedestrians passing through the Parramatta Rd intersection. My daughter currently uses the pedestrian overpass bridge every day to travel home from school. She currently walks past the planned construction site to get to our home. I fear for her safety. This will be exacerbated by the proposed closure of the Bland Street pedestrian bridge for periods during construction. If this plan is to persist we require an appropriately qualified traffic controller to be present at all times on Bland Street, at the exit from the Parramatta Road site, to help ensure pedestrian safety, particularly that of school aged children.

The construction site exit will increase congestion along Bland St, Ashfield and Haberfield – a significant north/south and connecting road. This road which passes our house is already very congested, particularly at peak times and on weekends. The location of the Bland St construction site is on narrow road, very close to intersection lights. This construction exit will enter directly onto a traffic lane travelling in a north and south direction. Construction vehicles entering Bland St, Ashfield and turning left onto Parramatta Rd to travel in a westerly direction will occupy the two turning lanes before the intersection. This will make the build-up of traffic at the intersection greater than it already is. Long waiting times encourage people to get impatient and take risks which will endanger the lives of the many pedestrians and cyclists around this intersection.

Bland St is currently part of a state cycle-way and is used by many commuters to the city. It is also used by many pedestrians making their way to Haberfield Public School, St John's Anglican Church, St John's Pre-school, St Vincent's Catholic Church, St Vincent's Primary School, Marist Brothers College and Bethlehem College, which are ALL located on Bland Street.

Our house windows are adjacent to the stop sign at the intersection of Julia St and Bland St. Julia St is the last opportunity to turn off Bland Street before entering the narrow section of Bland St heading down to the proposed construction site and the traffic lights at the intersection on Parramatta Rd. I expect that there will be a large build-up of traffic at this stop sign waiting to get down the road. This will cause

considerable and unacceptable noise, vibration pollution and traffic congestion in this location, which will have an adverse effect on the health and wellbeing of myself and my family.

I object to the likelihood of local streets, including my own street, being used as 'marshalling areas' for trucks waiting to enter the construction site.

I also object to the increase in localised pollution around construction sites, especially the Parramatta Rd construction exit onto Bland St, Ashfield, which is near my home. Construction vehicles will be heavily laden and will require revving in order to power up the incline towards the Parramatta Rd intersection. These diesel vehicles, will be revving up or idling around the intersection and spewing out the most dangerous pollutants, which will sit and hang low around the natural gully which surrounds the Parramatta Rd and Bland St intersection. This will cause noise disturbance and pollution to all who live and work around the intersection, including my family.

With reference to human health, (page 93, Section 7.4.3, Volume 2E) in relation to pollution the EIS states that: '... for a number of areas where traffic on the surface roads is expected to increase as a result of the project a small increase in pollutant concentration may occur.' The EIS does not identify the location and properties known to be affected by an increase in pollution due to the project, yet the EIS assumes mitigating treatment will be provided and taken up by residents. I object that the EIS does not identify, confirm or recommend specific mitigation for all the residents and businesses impacted by the construction zone around the Parramatta Rd, Ashfield/Haberfield interchange site (on road surface and tunnel construction areas). By restricting the footprint of the project's impact to just 50 meters along the indicative route, the true number of properties and people adversely impacted is hidden, and the true costs of mitigation avoided.

I object to the likelihood of local streets being used for parking by construction workers on the project. These streets are already full of commuters parking to go to the railway station or Parramatta Rd buses to travel to the city. The government

would be much better off spending taxpayer's money on multi storey parking stations at the railway stations along the Inner West line.

Proposed changes to public bus services will affect my daughter who travels on the #461 bus every day to school at Concord. The bus stop on Parramatta Road Ashfield (westbound at Chandos Street) will be closed for the duration of construction and relocated further away from our home.

The Project includes acquisition of a part of Reg Coady Reserve and Leasing of other parts of the park. The Project includes removal of several large Fig trees within the Reg Coady reserve and will disrupt public pedestrian access and resident amenity in and around that reserve due to footpath closures and light-spill associated with construction works. My family and I regularly use Reg Coady Reserve and Timbrell Park off-leash area with our dogs from our home in Ashfield. This will be very difficult with the construction on Parramatta Road and around Reg Coady Reserve.

Yours Sincerely,  
Ramesh Dean Chinnappa  
19 Julia St  
Ashfield NSW 2131

