

Parliamentary Inquiry into the Impacts of WestConnex Submission Guide

prepared for the community by the offices
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BASIC INFORMATION

Submissions are open until 31 August and can be made online [here](#).

This submission guide aims to provide information on the 10 Terms of Reference given by the Public Accountability Committee to assist members of the public in completing their submissions.

You can find more information about the Inquiry [here](#):

TIPS FOR YOUR SUBMISSION

There is no set format for a written submission.

Your submission must be relevant to the terms of reference. The terms of reference describe the subject of the inquiry and set the boundaries. You only need to address those issues that are relevant to you. You may wish to use the terms of reference as headings to provide a clear structure to your submission.

If your submission does not address any or all of the terms of reference the committee may not accept it as evidence. Make sure you include your contact information along with your submission.

USEFUL INFORMATION

- The NSW Greens submissions on the WestConnex Environmental Impact Statements for the M4 East, the New M5 and the M4-M5 can be found [here](#).
- The Peoples' WestConnex Inquiry which was conducted by Jenny Leong MP, featured a range of expert and community presentations. You can find video presentations and transcripts [here](#).

TERMS OF REFERENCE

A. The adequacy of the business case for the WestConnex project, including the cost-benefits ratio

- The **NSW Greens** submission to Stage 3 EIS states:

The Business Case for this project is inaccurate and misleading and has not been amended to reflect the significant changes to this project's scope from the March 2016 SEARS to revisions in September and then November 2016 which include extra kilometres of tunnel and stub infrastructure to link to further proposed infrastructure. Additionally the removal of the proposed portals in Camperdown means that the existing traffic modelling is more inaccurate particularly in relation to the St Peters Interchange and therefore the predictions of usage of WestConnex are also inaccurate.
- The **City of Sydney** commissioned an independent report into the WestConnex Updated Business Case by SGS. It is a scathing criticism of many of the assumptions made in the Business Case. Read the Report [here](#)
- Jenny Leong MP, wrote about the claims in the business case for WestConnex in this [article](#) in the New Matilda

'The much touted \$20 billion economic benefit has been calculated in terms of 'expected time savings' and reliability, however, as experts have explained, savings in personal travel time do not equate with higher productivity and the monetary value placed on these savings has been vastly overestimated. It is clear this is a spurious claim.'
- A Citigroup report indicated that the traffic modelling figures had overestimated usage of WestConnex by 10%. Given this and other expert analyses of the WestConnex Business Case showing its deficiencies and inaccuracies, the Business Case predictions and cost benefit ratio are unreliable.
 - **Greens MP Jenny Leong's** response to this [report](#).
 - **ABC News** [report](#).
 - **Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore's** [opinion piece](#)
- The NSW government has instructed transport officials to ignore public transport alternatives to motorway projects, with reference to the F6. Projects such as WestConnex should have been benchmarked against public transport options so that the cost comparisons and relative efficiencies were analysed and documented.

B. The cost of WestConnex project, including the size and reasons for overruns

- Previous toll road projects have overestimated the travel time savings and drivers propensity to use the toll road to the point where the toll roads have been financial disasters. These include the Lane Cove Tunnel and Cross City Tunnel.
- The project costs are uncertain and very high.

- The budget for WestConnex is now \$16.8b – a 68% increase on the original estimate.
- The **SGS Business Case Report** compared WestConnex to major international transport projects and even projects in Sydney over the past two decades to show that WestConnex has an exceedingly high cost.

TABLE 2. MAJOR INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT PROJECTS

Project	Country	Type	Cost (\$m) AUD	Length (km)	Cost per km (\$m)	Users per annum
Wuhan–Guangzhou High-Speed Railway	China	High-speed rail	\$23,288	968.00	\$24	20.5 Million
Beijing–Shanghai High-Speed Railway	China	High-speed rail	\$47,260	1318.00	\$36	100 Million
Toei Ōedo Line	Japan	Rapid Transit	\$15,616	40.70	\$384	290 Million
Channel Tunnel	UK	Subsea railway tunnel	\$21,507	50.45	\$426	21 Million
WestConnex	Australia	Road Tunnel/at grade extension	\$16,800	33.00	\$509	0.8 Million (estimate)

TABLE 3. COMPARISON OF WESTCONNEX TO HISTORIC SYDNEY ROAD PROJECTS

Project	Length (km)	Capital Cost as at contract signed date	Year of contract	Opened	Cost at open date (\$m)	Cost per km (\$m)	Cost 2015 (\$m)
M4 Motorway	12.5	\$246.0	December 1989	May 1992	\$269.07	\$49.60	\$620.04
M5 Motorway	21	\$380.0	February 1991	August 1992	\$401.00	\$43.61	\$915.81
Sydney Harbour Tunnel	3.0	\$685.0	June 1987	August 1992	\$826.89	\$629.49	\$1,888.46
M2 Motorway	20	\$644.0	August 1994	May 1997	\$710.74	\$68.45	\$1,369.00
Eastern Distributor	6	\$700.0	August 1997	December 1999	\$741.83	\$222.71	\$1,336.28
WestConnex	33		2016	2021		\$509.09	\$16,800.0

- The City of Sydney has identified \$28.5 billion worth of extra costs attached to the project, bringing the total cost to an estimated \$45.3 billion.
- Official estimates don't include consideration of all costs including:
 - The cost of compulsory land and property acquisition which is currently excluded from WestConnex's capital cost.
 - The cost of legal challenges to compulsory acquisitions.
 - The environmental and health impacts of increased car usage induced by WestConnex.
 - Increase in traffic accidents as a result of increased traffic on surface roads, for example, in and around the St Peters Interchange, Haberfield and Ashfield and along Parramatta Road.

C. Consideration of the governance and structure of the WestConnex project including the relationship between Sydney Motorway Corporation, Roads and Maritime Services, the Treasury and its shareholding Ministers

- In 2015 the government transferred the functions of the WestConnex Delivery Authority and to the Sydney Motorway Corporation.
 - The Sydney Motorway Corporation is a private company which now has responsibility for the largest transport infrastructure project in the country and as

- such operates outside Roads and Maritime Services and the expertise within NSW Transport.
 - There no representatives from transport agencies on the Board of the organisation responsible for building WestConnex.
 - There is no proper transparency and accountability regarding crucial information on the WestConnex project such as expenditure, tenders and contracts because this information is no longer accessible to the public via freedom of information requests.
 - The public should have access to all information about this project whose shareholders are publicly elected politicians. However the government’s plan to sell off a controlling share in the Sydney Motorway Corporation will mean that the public benefit is severely compromised.
- Jenny Leong MP stated in [NSW Parliament](#) that:

‘We are faced with the complicity of senior Ministers in the deplorable process of allowing our Parliament to become the handmaiden of private corporations and for our public service to become nothing more than a rubber stamp for projects, such as WestConnex, which would never pass muster if they were subject to proper objective analysis and evaluated against well-developed alternatives.’

D. The compulsory acquisition of property for the project

- The [NSW Greens Submission to the M5 EIS](#) states:
 - The compulsory acquisition of residential homes and businesses to secure the passage for Westconnex is a serious concern and whether the true impact of this has been assessed by this EIS is highly questionable. Building Westconnex will mean that suburbs all along the 33 km route will be carved up by huge multi-lane roads, destroying community cohesion and access to amenities. The social impact statement barely recognises the impact that this will have on many residents and neighbourhoods, and the inconvenience, not to mention the financial loss that many people and businesses will surely experience.
- Many residents have faced expensive and lengthy legal battles with the government in order to get fair valuations on their homes. One resident received an offer from the RMS that valued his home at \$75,000 less than the NSW Valuer-General’s assessment. [See here.](#)
- [A comprehensive review of land acquisition](#) was completed by David Russell SC in 2014.
 - The Russell Review recommended a number of changes to the compulsory acquisition system including extra compensation, more time for home owners to negotiate and for home owners to be compensated on a ‘reinstatement basis’ to ensure they can afford an equivalent home.
 - This report and its recommendations was concealed from the public by the government for 2½ years

E. The recommendations of the Audit Office of New South Wales and the Australian National Audit Office in regards to WestConnex

- [NSW Auditor-General's Report](#) to Parliament 'WestConnex Assurance to the Government'.
 - This audit assesses the assurance provided to the NSW Government for the initial stages of the WestConnex project. It found a number of shortcomings with the governance of the WestConnex project during its early stages and makes recommendations on how to better govern the remainder of the project to minimise the risk of failure.
 - The National Audit Office's Report 'the Approval and Administration of Commonwealth Funding for the WestConnex Project' is [here](#).
 - This report was highly critical of the federal government's funding of the \$16.8 billion motorway and also found that upfront payments and altering milestones for later support "did not adequately protect the Australian government's financial interests".
 - The [NSW Greens Submission to the M4-M5 EIS](#) also states: The Report found that despite the consistent early advice from the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development and Infrastructure Australia that the project could not be recommended for federal funding, both the ALP and the Coalition provided significant support for it.
 - The report showed the government bypassed key governance structures in pushing through up a \$2 billion, 34 year concessional loan and providing a \$1.5billion grant. And that the public's interest was not fully represented in the terms of the concessional loan.

F. The extent to which the project is meeting the original goals of the project as articulated in 2012

- Since the project was first announced in 2012 there have been constant changes.
 - WestConnex began as a proposal to provide a road link from Western Sydney to Port Botany and Mascot airport. But in the last five years, designs have been scrapped, extra lanes and tunnels added, major intersections moved and removed, tolls introduced, construction sites proposed and abandoned. The current proposal does not include a link to Port Botany or Mascot airport but delivers vehicles seven kilometres away from Port Botany at St Peters.
 - The [SGS WestConnex Business Case Review](#) outlines the evolution of this project from the original route proposed in 2012 to the updated route (2014) and finally the 2015 Updated Strategic Business Case about which it specifically states:
 - Urban amenity and local traffic conditions will not be improved along Parramatta Road by WestConnex, and the opportunities for urban renewal will not be improved by the project. Hence one of the key strategic reasons for the project

has been lost.

- The Updated Strategic Business Case is also silent on the potential impact of the Western Sydney Airport on future traffic demand in relation to WestConnex.
- The [NSW Greens submission to the M4-M5 EIS](#) states:

We see now as well that the original rationale for WestConnex as laid out in all the SEARS documents - to provide a link from Sydney's western suburbs to Mascot airport and to Port Botany- has been removed along with the Sydney Gateway stage which would have facilitated this aim.

This significant alteration to the original premise of WestConnex should alone demand that the project is stopped and that the Business Case and all traffic modelling be reviewed so that the public is given an accurate indication of the real impact of this changed project.

This is not the only major alteration to the original scope and plans for WestConnex which demonstrates clearly that this project lacks any proper planning and process. This lack of proper planning and process has reached its apex with the M4-M5 Link EIS which is by its own admission only an 'indicative' plan. The lack of detailed plans in this EIS for what would be the most complex and expensive stage of WestConnex, is staggering.

G. The relationship between WestConnex and other toll road projects including the Sydney Gateway, Western Harbour Tunnel, F6 and Beaches Link

- The [SGS WestConnex Business Case Review](#) states that:

A key justification of WestConnex is access to Sydney Airport and the Port. However, the Sydney Gateway which would provide access to Sydney Airport is not going to be built at the same time as Stages 2 or 3. While supporting works to enable Sydney Gateway will be constructed, the Gateway itself will not be constructed as part of WestConnex and the costs associated with it are excluded. To this end, it appears WestConnex Business Case Review 21 counter-intuitive that data around travel time to the airport is presented at all in the Strategic Business Case.

Patronage forecasts for WestConnex require the Western Harbour Tunnel to feed traffic to Stage 3. The Western Harbour Tunnel has a preliminary cost of \$4.5 billion. The State Infrastructure Plan Update aims for the Western Harbour Tunnel to be delivered with, or immediately after, Stage 3 of WestConnex. However, a final business case is yet to be released. The full patronage potential of WestConnex Stage 3 cannot be realised without the Western Harbour Tunnel.

Traffic across ANZAC Bridge is estimated to increase by 20,000 vehicles for an average weekday due to the opening of on-ramps at Rozelle, providing westbound access from ANZAC Bridge to WestConnex. However, this will change once the Western Harbour Tunnel and Northern Beaches Link are in operation in the future.

H. The circumstances by which WestConnex and the Sydney Gateway were declared to be separate projects in 2017

- The City of Sydney's [Submission on WestConnex Stage 3](#) states:
The M4-M5 Link is designed as one component of the WestConnex program of works, with the final phase being the Sydney Gateway (the Gateway). The Gateway is a connection between the St Peters Interchange and the Sydney Airport and Port Botany precincts without which the supposed benefits of the M4-M5 Link cannot be realised. The current design doesn't serve this original purpose. Despite the Government's enthusiastic support for the Sydney Gateway project, in reality it remains a project in name only. There is no information available about it, no preliminary design, which raises questions about whether the project is feasible, particularly given the technical challenges involved at Sydney Airport.
The completion of the M4-M5 Link without the Gateway means the primary goal of completing the link between Sydney's west and south-west with Sydney Airport and the Port Botany precinct will have failed.
- This raises a number of questions:
 - Why and when were these two projects separated?
 - If the Sydney Gateway is now excluded, how does this impact the cost-benefit analysis for WestConnex? Does it necessitate a new business case?

I. The cost of the project against its current valuation as determined through the sale of the Sydney Motorway Corporation and whether it represents a good investment for NSW taxpayers.

- WestConnex doesn't represent a good investment for NSW taxpayers because the whole premise of the NSW Government's current proposal – that WestConnex will reduce congestion and decrease travel times for people in Western Sydney – is blatantly false. This is made clear in the Government's own business case which shows:
 - WestConnex will save most users only five minutes
 - In many cases catching public transport will remain a faster way to move around
 - It will reach capacity in just eight years.

J. Any other related matter

HEALTH IMPACTS

- The [NSW Greens submission to Stage 3 EIS](#) states:

WestConnex will impact negatively on the health and wellbeing of residents in the inner west specifically increasing toxic pollution levels near the proposed unfiltered ventilation stacks which are located in residential areas and also near schools and parks as well as bringing tens of thousands more cars onto roads in the inner west. Particulate Matter affects more people than any other pollutant and the most health-damaging particles are those with a diameter of 10 microns or less, (\leq PM10), which can penetrate and lodge deep inside the lungs which are those which will be concentrated in highly densely populated areas as a result of WestConnex.

This project will lock Western Sydney residents into non-active transport which will have long term negative health impacts on generations of people. Additionally the negative health impacts of using this series of long tunnels over the short and long term are unacceptable due to the increased levels of toxic exhaust pollution concentrated in these tunnels.

CLIMATE CHANGE RISK

- The [NSW Greens submission to Stage 3 EIS](#) states:

There are significant high risks identified to the operation of the project related to climate change, including an increase in the intensity and frequency of extreme rainfall and an increase in frequency and intensity of extreme heat events. Of note is the extreme risk of flooding at Rozelle as a result of intense rainfall combined with sea level rise and an increase in extreme storm surges into Rozelle Bay. These risks have not been properly assessed and no mitigation proposals have been included in this plan. The expenditure of billions of dollars of public money on a project with risks such as these is irresponsible. The climate impacts of large scale unsustainable infrastructure such as WestConnex are unacceptable.

IMPACT ON ABORIGINAL SITES

- The [NSW Greens submission to Stage 3 EIS](#) states:

There are at least 13 significant Aboriginal sites within 500 metres of the WestConnex project corridor and the Iron Cove Link including rock art and shelters, middens, open artefact sites and potential archaeological deposits which may be negatively impacted by the M4-M5 works especially as the specific routes and construction methods are unknown and so the potential impact could be severe.

EXHAUST STACKS

- Extensive information on air pollution and the impact of ventilation stacks can be found in the [2001 Report](#) by the Legislative Council into the M5 East Ventilation Stack
- As a matter of policy by both Labor and Liberal governments, no tunnel ventilation stacks in NSW are filtered. The former NSW Labor government ignored the huge campaign to filter the M5 tollways and still does not have a policy to filter all smokestacks.

The Liberal government has exactly the same policy for the tollways they are proposing, including WestConnex. This is despite current premier Gladys Berejiklian's strong opposition to unfiltered exhaust stacks when in opposition. Adding a filtration system to tunnel exhaust stacks is world's best practice.