



## PEOPLES WESTCONNEX INQUIRY

NSW PARLIAMENT, JUBILEE ROOM - Friday 6 May, 10am – 2pm

### Session 1: Liveable Cities - WestConnex impacts on our suburbs and city

**Mark Ely, CEO Newtown Business Precinct Association**

Thanks, Jenny. Thanks once again for allowing the Precinct Association to actually have a voice. It's not often as a local business owner, that you get thrust into these situations and certainly when I took on the President role, which was before the announcement of WestConnex, this was not on the agenda.

I'd like to just give you a few stats as to why the Precinct Association is so concerned about WestConnex, and in particular, Stage 2 and then Stage 3 to follow. According to research that we conducted last year on our visitor economy, in the next 12 months alone, up to 465,000 people are predicted to park on King Street. Each one of those visitors will spend at least \$46 in our local businesses. Clearways, therefore, spell certain death for one of Sydney's—arguably—finest high streets. That's \$21.37 million worth of loss to the economy, so you can understand why, as a local business owner, with two businesses myself on the street, why we're concerned about this monstrous project.

As a resident, of course I'm even further opposed to the project as a taxpayer of this state—I just can't understand how this is happening on our watch. More like, I can understand, but you know, let's not go there. I'm here to outline what the Precinct Association is concerned about most.

We have endeavoured, throughout the entire process, since Stage 2 was announced on Melbourne Cup Day two years ago now to engage with the various stakeholders—so that's RMS, WestConnex's delivery authority—now the Sydney Motorways Corporation etcetera—and we actually have had some success in meeting with them, to the point where we had a sit-down meeting with Duncan Gay himself. It didn't get us anywhere, but we had it.

Our biggest concern is that although WestConnex has been at pains to say that King Street will be protected and that they have no plans to implement clearways on King Street, the fact remains that all throughout their documents they reserve the right to go back and review the situation should the need arise. As a local resident, as a local business owner, everyone knows you can't keep feeding more traffic into King Street—it's already a Grade F road at certain times, and Grade F being, it just doesn't move as fast as it should. The removal of parking on King Street will almost certainly kill the high street as we know it today.



We've seen it all over Sydney—look at Parramatta Road, look at Oxford Street—it happens everywhere—Victoria Road—wherever clearways exist, high streets cease to function. Without a high street, Newtown ceases to function because King Street is the mind and soul of our suburb and so therefore we are utterly opposed to this project because of the danger it poses to what the RMS may have to do to keep that street flowing.

We also have concerns over the seven year period of construction because, as we all know, there's very little information about how construction will be managed. Where will the trucks go that take all of the material away and bringing stuff in to the St Peters construction site?

There's so much for us to be concerned about and so we continue to voice our opposition to the project while also pragmatically thinking about what can we do once the project or, you know, the motorways come into play. So we are now, in conjunction with the City of Sydney and Anthony Albanese's office and with Jenny's office, starting to scope out what, as a community and a business community, we can look at to protect our vital high street so, for example, pedestrianisation of parts of King Street or surrounding side street hubs where we can try and activate off King Street to see if we can somehow save our suburb if the RMS goes ahead and changes clearways.

We want to try and access as much information as possible through consultation with the various stakeholders and avidly we continue to support our local Stop WestConnex Group, so thank you.