



PEOPLES WESTCONNEX INQUIRY

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

Session 3: Environment - WestConnex ecological impacts and loss of green space

Daisy Barham, Campaigns Director Nature Conservation Council

DAISY BARHAM: Thanks very much and apologies for being a bit late — I forgot my bike lock which is always a bit of a problem but luckily Les helped me out. Thanks very much everyone for being here, it's really impressive to see so many people here in the middle of the day, a real sign of a community opposition to this project. Thanks of course to Jenny for organising today.

Certainly a lot of issues that need to be aired about WestConnex We certainly heard a lot about the ecological impacts so rather than re-hashing some of that content I'll probably focus on the bigger picture as I see it and that's the loss of bushland across Sydney. It's a huge ... Me being an environmentalist and thinking back to when I was young, what was it that made me care about bushland and nature? It was having access to it in the city where I grew up, up in Brisbane, and it is really concerning to know that not just through WestConnex but other projects we see from the Baird government, like the Randwick trees issue. This is a pattern that we are significantly losing bushland, nature corridors, important wildlife habitat from across the city.

What does that mean for our next generation of people who may not have those experiences of bushland in our city? I think that's hugely concerning and something certainly concerns us here at NCC because we do know that those early experiences of when you're a kid out in the bush are absolutely pivotal for that sense of custodianship that we all should share for the city that we live in. And you can see the figures, I mean we are talking about was it 1.5 hectares or 1.8 hectares of.. Yeah, 1.4 that's going to be destroyed. I mean, that is a tiny amount of bushland to start with let alone sacrificing it even more for the sake of a toll route that we all know here today simply won't work.

I think NCC— Well, I know NCC is certainly really concerned about the amount of money that's going on this project. No doubt you've heard a lot about that through the rest of proceedings today.

It's really clear to us where the priorities of the Baird government are, they are on massive infrastructure projects that we know won't solve the problems that they are espoused to do. We certainly see it as a huge ... as the wrong priorities ... The government is obviously pushing massive new tollroads at the same time as we see our public infrastructure, things like public transport, are so desperately underfunded.



We are also concerned with the lack of transparency with the project, we know overwhelmingly that the majority of the public submissions into every stage of WestConnex are overwhelmingly opposed to the developments and yet we continue to see the Baird government still push it through. I think this is a critical test for our planning system and I think the results — you've spoken about this already — the results so resoundingly show that we need fundamental reform to the way projects are managed and planning is managed in New South Wales, specifically here in Sydney, so that we are not continuing to lose the green lungs of our city.

I think much of what I was going to say has already been covered so I might just leave it there; other than to say I think the WestConnex project is a real opportunity for us to unite around what our vision is for Sydney, one that doesn't include bulldozing the really vital pockets of bush and trees that we have left.

So thanks very much all for you being here, this absolutely is a campaign that's been run by the community and I think our politicians know that. The lead up to the federal election clearly is an opportunity to demand the kind of Sydney that we want. So thanks very much for you being here and I think it's a really inspiring and pretty exciting campaign, to be honest. Good on you all! Thanks.