



## PEOPLES WESTCONNEX INQUIRY

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

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

**Kathy Calman, Kingsgrove WestConnex Action Group**

KATHY CALMAN: Have you taken a moment to think what impact the focus on only roads, pretty much, as a transport solution has on our community's green space and actually our health? So my name is Kathy Calman, I actually live on the M5 at Beverly Hills, I have lived through the first major construction in 1999 and am now reliving that horror again with an early phase of WestConnex. So I stand here today as a witness to what the impact of road building has on our environment, the suburbs that we live in. My experience is translated across any suburb in any country.

So it's a given that we need to drive at times but what's the cost? Does anyone ever think about that? The cost on our mental and our physical health because roads are space hungry and parking is space hungry and always the very first casualty is always our public space. So I watched the first M5 being built and I witnessed the huge social impact the M5 had on our community and we watched, in absolute horror, the awful destruction of our beautiful Beverley Grove Park and our critically endangered Cooks River Clay Plain Scrub Forest - that's pretty hard to say to get it right. The sound of those chainsaws — can you imagine? I still remember and men cried.

So we went through years of dirty construction and at the end of it to thank the residents for the acquisition of our homes and the huge loss of our park, one of the very few parks that we've got, is this cheap, ugly, noise walls [Inaudible question from the audience]. No, it's concrete. Do you see any plants? No, they didn't really bother much. That was the governments thanks to us after years, this was our Berlin Wall and it actually features in the RMS Urban Landscape Design Principles as an excellent example of what not to do.

We needed that park that was destroyed because we don't have much green space in Beverly Hills and we had kids playing sport there and we also had the Cooks River Clay Plain Scrub. So after the first M5, all we had was a linear portion left and 1.8 hectares of the bushland. And that was also a condition for approval with the first M5 and so precious is that woodland and still so beautiful today but it's protected by a fence.

So my question to you now: Do you remember as a kid when you used to ride your bike around the streets, catch up with your mates, go and get some bread and milk for mum down the road? At Beverly Hills now, our kids cannot do that because little kids and cars don't mix. So that's just one reason why what we have left now at Beverly Hills, our Linear Park, is prized because that's the only place our children can ride their bikes safely. Now this walkway goes for kilometres and although this Berlin Wall, it's still there.



It's through the efforts of residents, a lot of residents like me and my neighbours, that we watered and we replanted and we used our own worm castings and compost to rebuild our environment. Although there are sections that are still really ugly, our ten years of effort have paid off and for the last five years we've seen a significant change in our environment — there are some sections that are absolutely beautiful.

That's what's important for a community, is to have somewhere to go - somewhere just to clear your head from the day's stress and to reconnect with nature. You want to walk on our M5 Linear Park, you want to cycle and so many families, more and more, are bringing their kids along with their tricycles. It's now a central part of our community for exercise and also, because it's popular, one of those spots where you have accidental meetings, your connectivity with the community.

Our Linear Park is also important for the foraging of the rare Grey Headed Flying Fox because it's a bushland corridor and also all the native birds. The path is chalked with the lengths so that kids train for their running races and our high schools use it for their cross country training. Because the trees we planted, we the residents, have now started to mature and they now shade the path. It's not just a lovely place to exercise, it's also an active transport that connects the community to the train station and the shops and our schools. We are so congested at Beverly Hills that by car you can't get out in the morning, you can't turn left, you can't turn right but we can still walk and we can still cycle through the M5 Linear Park.

It's not a large space, it's very narrow but it's all we've got left. So, unbelievably, this new WestConnex will destroy it completely. One of the few things we had left. What has really, really enraged is the insensitivity of these WestConnex engineers. In the EIS they state that although the new M5 constitutes a significant character change in our community, they have used this as a benchmark to justify the degrading of the rest of our environment. And to add salt to the wound, this is just one little section — it looks nice — they are going to enhance the motorists' experience by putting up transparent noise walls so that they can have a view of the golf course and our backyards.

If we use the M5 Linear walk, that's just what we'll see — ten lanes of road. To us at Beverly Hills as it is for every other suburb, this is hideous what they are doing to us. And to have Frank from ACOM, the landscaper, he told me that they are going to leave what's left of our noise walls there, most of them, because it's easier for the maintenance crew to inspect.

We've got five years of construction and that's what we get. To me, I don't know — what's your vision? Is it this? Or this? Kids playing in our park or a spaghetti interchange? I like this statement — I don't know where I got it from — 'the cumulative impact caused by the insatiable appetite of the Car God and the willingness of his worshipper, Duncan Gay, to offer up a sacrifice the very thing the communities value.' Thank you for listening to me. Let's stop this road together.