



## PEOPLES WESTCONNEX INQUIRY

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

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

**Kerry Barlow, Save Ashfield Park / No WestConnex: Public Transport**

KERRY BARLOW: Thanks Jenny for the opportunity to be part of this really important initiative and thanks to everyone here who are showing their keenness. I wish to speak firstly about the less visible ecological effects of this disastrous project and these are the adverse impacts of the project on the general air quality of Sydney and on the immediate air quality within those sections of the project, especially around the unfiltered portals and unfiltered stacks. And then I'll have a look at what's happening to the so-called green space, what's left of it, in the corridors around the WestConnex.

So looking briefly at the air quality impacts, the Australian Medical Association's submission to the 2013 Senate enquiry into air quality in Australia stated that the current air quality monitoring and reporting practices in Australia were significantly underestimating real life exposures for many sections of the population, in particular locations. And this would especially be true of those parts of inner Sydney which have multiple main thoroughfares that are already congested with polluting traffic.

In California there was a study amongst numerous other studies, but this one was of 3,600 children between the ages of 10 and 18 and they were in 12 areas of Southern California with a wide range of air qualities. They were measuring their lung capacity using three different measures and they were doing that annually for eight years. They found pronounced deficits in lung development amongst children who lived closest to the motorways, i.e. under 500 metres. Now a lot of us think 200-300 metres is probably reasonably okay from a motorway but these findings were really important because they replicated what they'd found in London near motorways. So if you're living 500 metres or less to a main motorway, they found that these children had quite severe respiratory complaints, even when factors such as exposure to cigarette smoke was taken into account. The significantly reduced rates of growth in certain of the younger children ... Even in teenagers who had never experienced asthma, their lung development was much less.

The NSW Environment Protection Authority claims it has an effective system of monitoring air quality in Sydney. It has several monitoring stations around Sydney, you only have to go to their website, it's easy to Google it, and have a look at some of the readings. But the only one near the Inner West, I live near Ashfield obviously or in Ashfield, the only one near us is at Rozelle and it only started to measure PM2.5 after the EIS submissions in which one or two of us raised the fact that it wasn't measuring PM2.5, even though it was a critical pollutant that would need to then be monitored after the project was completed.



So suddenly, there was a bit of data on PM2.5 and I'm interested to note they haven't added any new trends yet but I'm hoping that they will continue to meet their requirements by law.

Both the M4 and M5 Environmental Impact Statements claimed that the ambient air quality will only be marginally, if at all, affected by WestConnex. And yet, the ambient air is an average measure so what they do is they take all the readings and they average it out so what you're not learning about, what is hidden in the data, are the hotspots. The air quality impact statement component of the M4 EIS clearly showed that the Concord to Haberfield corridor is already polluted by traffic emissions with numerous hotspots where readings of the two key pollutants, PM2.5 and finer and NO2, were higher than current national standards or the advisory standard. The trouble with that advisory standard is a lot of people see it as "Oh, well if you're below the standard it's safe and if you're above the standard that's a bit of a worry." In actual fact all the health research indicates, and the WHO has come out and said, there is no 'safe' threshold - because you don't know whose immune system is going to let them down when they are exposed to even a small amount of PM2.5.

The most common source of PM2.5 and smaller particles in the Inner West, and I'm sure it's the same in Bexley area, is diesel fuel use. The Sydney truck fleet is 95% diesel and there has been an exponential growth in diesel utes and four wheel drive vehicles. Some health professionals are beginning to call PM2.5 - the asbestos of the 21st century.

At Ashfield/Haberfield the plan is to co-locate two stacks so if they finish the third stage, we're not going to have just one unfiltered stack, we're going to have two because you've got to place a stack around about 200-300 metres from the portals. So if they finish stage three, we're going to get a double whammy where we are in Ashfield/Haberfield and they will significantly be concentrated emissions.

I could rave on, as I do sometimes at local meetings about these statistics and the way that we were treated with the EIS submissions, they completely disregarded all the important things that were raised and the lack of respect for the work that locals did to bring themselves up to speed. My background is economics, it's not air quality, but I just know from looking around at some of the complaints my neighbours have and myself that air quality was a critical issue and it's going to get worse.

What has been the loss of green space in our area or what will it be? Stage 1B, that's the Concord to Ashfield/Haberfield end will see several parks really adversely affected. There's been a small one lost in Homebush already but Cintra Park Concord and Reg Coady Reserve Haberfield will lose numerous very mature trees, just like the big, old trees that we've lost down Anzac Parade. There are a lot of very mature fig trees and other species that we're going to lose in those two parks, particularly Reg Coady Reserve. We will have ventilation stacks located in or close to those two parks where people will be playing, children will be using what little space there is.



Cintra Park hockey field has had to be relocated given the tunnel will be constructed in two directions from that site. The children's playground called "Libby's Place" at Reg Coady Reserve, where I take my grandchildren on a regular basis, will be badly affected by truck movements, noise and dust. It's one of the very few safe, appropriately designed in the whole of the Ashfield/Haberfield/Fivedock areas. That's a big area. One playground that's been really well thought through and constructed for safety for children, it's going to be right on top of the construction site. Sorry, I'm going to finish.

Ashfield Park, whilst Duncan Gay is said to have spared it, because he listened to the locals will have the entry and exit portals adjacent to it causing additional pollution once the traffic banks up on Parramatta Road, which we know it probably will. We've also just learned that Optus has been forced from its current site near Parramatta Road and wants to relocate a six metre by six metre concrete base for its structure in our park. It's just put a request into the Council. As we know, under the Communications Act, what the communicators want, they get — I saw it when I worked at Meadowbank TAFE NSW Central office and we got the tower on top of the college. The air quality impact of having the portals located adjacent to Ashfield Park, the traffic on Parramatta Road, will mean users of the front of the park in particular will be exposed to additional harmful pollution.

John Bartholomew did a count of trees under threat from the M5 stage of West Connect, he counted 710 trees just on Euston Road and Campbell Road east of Princes Highway will be lost and not including the ones in people's backyards. That's very briefly how some of the green space is being treated with this project. Thank-you.