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NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No 6
Parliament House
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SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: portfoliocommittee6@parliament.nsw.gov.au

15th March 2024

Dear Committee Members,

Re: Inquiry into the Impact of the Rozelle Interchange

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this Parliamentary Inquiry.

Bicycle NSW has been the peak bicycle advocacy group in NSW for forty-eight years and has more than 30 affiliated local Bicycle User Groups. Our mission is to 'create a better environment for all bicycle riders', and we support improvements to facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Bike riding provides a healthy, congestion-reducing, low-carbon form of travel that is quiet, efficient, and attractive for all ages with the correct infrastructure design.

Please note that this submission can be published in full on your website, with Bicycle NSW named as the author.

Bicycle NSW is pleased that the NSW Government has responded to community advocacy and elected to scrutinise the traffic modelling and design decisions behind the troubled Rozelle Interchange project.

There are so many failures with WestConnex. The Rozelle Interchange is just one cog of an expensive, destructive, traffic inducing and carbon intensive project that has divided communities and entrenched car dependency for future generations.

WestConnex is hopefully the last gasp from a fossilised section of Transport for NSW that prioritises Level of Service for vehicles and refuses to grasp the concept of induced demand. It is clear that the project proponents applied 'predict and provide' modelling rather than the 'vision and validate' approach now embedded in forward-thinking transport planning processes.

The tentacles of this project keep spreading across the city as more roads are made bigger to feed WestConnex. We have made many submissions and written to decision makers about the plans for the [Warringah Freeway](#), [Western Harbour Tunnel](#), [Western Distributor 'improvements'](#) and [Sydney Gateway](#). The shocking mess on the north side to expand the [Warringah Freeway Upgrade](#) does not include the game-changing upgrades to the active transport network that residents and commuters have advocated for over three decades. [Sydney Gateway](#) has concreted over critical opportunities to connect the airport to the Inner West. The [Western Distributor changes](#) will bring more traffic into Pyrmont, running roughshod over many years of hard work to improve pedestrian amenity.

But no bureaucrats or politicians have been able to stand up to the juggernaut and press pause on these projects.

Urban motorways are not only devastating for the environment but come at enormous cost. WestConnex cost \$16.8bn and Sydney Gateway \$1.7bn. Another \$4.2bn is being spent on related projects such as the Warringah Freeway Upgrade.

And now we have a commitment from the Labor Government to subsidise WestConnex tolls on the basis of equity, sucking another \$0.5bn from transport and housing projects that might actually improve equitable access to a high standard of living for Sydney's residents.

The 'opportunity cost' is also huge. Hectares of land consumed that can no longer be used for housing and parks. Billions squandered that could have set Sydney up with the most amazing bicycle network, and rebuilt footpaths to improve comfort and safety of walkers. Another generation of children denied healthy, low-cost ways to move around. The chance to make real progress on Net Zero targets to decarbonise transport.



Figure 1: The community was promised that the Rozelle Interchange would be mostly underground but the impact on the Inner West at surface level is profound. The failure of recent transport planning has been exposed. No modern, forward-thinking city should have roads like this on the edge of the CBD. Especially not roads built in the 2020s! (Image: Jake Coppinger)

We look forward to the Inquiry's exposition of the technical issues with the project's design, and the bureaucratic tangle of incompetence that allowed it to continue to this stage. Many experts in transport planning, policy and engineering will provide detailed observations.

Bicycle NSW's submission will highlight the major issues for people walking and cycling in and around the interchange. Although our comments and recommendations touch on several of the Term of Reference for the Inquiry, we will focus on:

(g) the impact on foot traffic and active transport options, including due to the closure of Rozelle Parklands

Motorways are not the right solution for Sydney's transport needs. It may not be possible 'fix' the congestion at Rozelle Interchange and we urge the Inquiry to look beyond solutions to traffic jams and **ensure that alternatives to driving are prioritised** in every decision going forward.

Active Transport at Rozelle

Although delighted by the new shared paths and active transport bridges delivered by the Rozelle Interchange, the bike community is very frustrated that many critical connections to adjacent streets and the wider bike network were neglected or ignored by the project team.

The missing active transport connections represent a failure to meet the Conditions of Approval for WestConnex.

The NSW Minister for Planning's [original conditions](#) E57 to E60 considered pedestrian and cyclist access, both during and after construction. Condition E58 specified that "the Proponent must provide improved connectivity for cyclists and pedestrians between Roberts Street and Springside Street". E60 required a Pedestrian and Bicycle Implementation Plan, outlining connections to existing local and regional routes. All identified works arising from this condition were to be implemented prior to the commencement of project operations, in accordance with relevant Australian Standards and Austroads guidelines.

The Urban Design and Landscape Plan (UDLP) stated that one of the project's objectives is to support active transport through the development of safe, accessible, and well-integrated walking and cycling infrastructure.

The WestConnex website clearly states that the project aims to 'move traffic and heavy vehicles to the underground motorway, reducing traffic on local streets and creating opportunities for urban renewal'.

The need to provide good quality cycle connections to and across the Parklands (and not just within the site boundary) was given further impetus by the **2022 Strategic Cycleway Corridors** program. Two strategic cycleways pass the Parklands, connecting Drummoyne and Lilyfield to the Sydney CBD. The 'Lilyfield Connection' is listed as one of these top five priorities for the NSW Government.

Our 2022 issues paper [Rozelle Interchange: Moving Forwards](#) has detailed commentary on the opportunities offered by the project.

What has emerged from the rubble within a 1km radius of the project?

- The Lilyfield Connection remains an illusion of fantasy for Inner West bike riders

Although the excellent shared path through the Parklands to the Anzac Bridge has delivered a high-quality facility east of Ryan Street, nothing has been done to improve comfort and safety on Lilyfield Road west of the Parklands, despite many years of advocacy and consultation. The speed limit was reset to 50km/h, completely inappropriate in an area busy with vulnerable road users. In addition, essential pedestrian and cycle crossings to allow access to the Parklands across Lilyfield Road were not delivered.

- Connectivity for cyclists has not been improved between Roberts Street and Springside Street

E58 did not specifically require the cycleway to be provided in the Victoria Road reservation. A back street mixed-traffic route that avoids Victoria Road was chosen to meet the condition. The WestConnex team made some very minor improvements to an existing route from Moodie Street to the Rozelle Parklands via Gordon St. But this route is entirely substandard. It climbs steep hills and uses narrow streets clogged with parked cars and rat-running drivers. It is poorly signposted and unclear. It is not suitable for children, elders, less confident riders or commuters needing a fast, direct trip. It will do nothing to grow ridership on this important regional route.

WestConnex also promised to improve the shared path on the north side of Victoria Road to give bike riders a second possible route. In the end, very limited changes were made, and these happened alongside

multiple downgrades of the facility. The Victoria Road shared path remains a narrow dog's dinner, interrupted by dangerous side street intersections and obstructed by poles, electricity boxes, and bus shelters. There are now 102 poles and other obstacles on the 1400m from Springside to Roberts - an average of one pole or obstruction every 14m!

- Victoria Road remains an ugly, congested traffic sewer

Of course, our advocacy to [NSW Government](#) and TfNSW to reduce space for vehicles on Victoria Road, in line with 50% drop in traffic promised to the community, and deliver the changes set out Inner West Council's draft [Rozelle Town Centre Masterplan](#), has been completely ignored. A golden opportunity has been missed to capitalise on WestConnex, rebalance road space, prioritise active and public transport, and boost economic activity and housing supply with mixed used development.

- Active transport is more unpleasant and unsafe than ever in and around Rozelle

While car journeys have gotten faster for many, walking and cycling trips are longer and less safe. People outside of vehicles are squeezed on treeless, noisy, polluted footpaths.

Modelling for Victoria Road never considered the walking and cycling journey times, or intersection delay for people using public and active transport. This is despite a seismic shift in NSW policy direction over the last 10 years, framed by innovative thinking around 'place' after 70 years of car-centric planning that focused on movement to the detriment of community, urban amenity, walkability, public health and air quality. The Movement and Place Framework takes an integrated cross-governmental approach to infrastructure projects and land use design. It is bolstered by two policies that require State projects to prioritise road space for active transport: [Road User Space Allocation Policy](#) and Providing for Walking and Cycling in Transport Projects Policy. The [Future Transport Strategy](#) further embeds movement-and-place thinking and promises to support car-free mobility and urban vitality by delivering 'connected walking and cycling networks which integrate with public transport and green infrastructure'.

Not traffic sewers that fail on every metric – and don't even solve traffic congestion.

Recommendations

In the short term:

1. Complete connections into and around Rozelle to meet WestConnex project obligations

Please refer to Bicycle NSW's [recent submission](#) to IWC recommending urgent short term actions to improve the active transport links into and around the Parklands.

Some connections are urgently needed for safety and to ensure that the excellent new shared paths can be accessed by local residents of all ages and abilities. Active transport could then provide a real alternative to sitting in a car on the congested surface road around the Rozelle (or Roze-hell!) Interchange.

The closure of the Parklands due to the asbestos was extremely disappointing. However, the project team now has a window to fix some mistakes. There must be no delay in creating safe access before the Parklands reopen in a few weeks. Temporary materials could be used to create safe and comfortable crossings and ramps if necessary.

Bicycle NSW asks Transport for NSW to work very closely with our advocacy partners at every stage of its endeavours to tackle unsafe and substandard elements of the walking and cycling network.

- The Rozelle Parklands Active Transport and Community Hub Incorporated has prepared a very comprehensive report listing the defective, non-compliant and missing elements of active transport infrastructure in and around the project site.
- The [Inner West Bicycle Coalition has developed a detailed list of upgrades](#) and improvements to streets in the area. Several of issues highlighted are located beyond the project footprint, reflecting how WestConnex missed opportunities to improve the wider walking and cycling.

We **strongly support** the suggestions made by these groups.

2. Deliver the full Lilyfield Connection as a high-quality strategic cycleway

Our report [Rozelle Interchange: Moving Forwards](#) discussed several possible ways for creating a safe and comfortable connection from Iron Cove to the western entrance of Rozelle Parklands at Ryan Street. There are well-conceived options that bypass parts of Lilyfield Road. These options recognise that inserting dedicated, separated bicycle infrastructure on Lilyfield Road is very contentious as it is narrow and lined with terrace houses that rely on street parking. In addition, the gradient west of James Street is challenging.

In the short term, the [most recent plans for Lilyfield Road](#) should be implemented. The plans proposed traffic calming, new raised crossings and an on-road cycleway, with cycle lanes on uphill sections and mixed traffic cycling on downhill sections. Although not an all ages and abilities facility that meets the criteria of a strategic cycleway corridor, a much wider range of bike riders will be comfortable using a modified Lilyfield Road, particularly as increased e-bike use irons out the hills.

Some modifications will be required to the 2019 plans now that the final configuration of the Rozelle Parklands paths is clear. East of Balmain Road, Lilyfield Road is bordered by non-residential uses on the southern side. In places there is **not even a footpath** here. Reconfigure the road space and verge to accommodate a wide, bi-directional bicycle path and a continuous footpath between Balmain Road and the Parklands.

3. Build continuous, comfortable and compliant shared paths on both sides of Victoria Road

Bicycle NSW will continue to advocate for the long overdue transformation of Victoria Road in line with the [Rozelle Town Centre Masterplan](#). The separated cycleway proposed for Victoria Road as part of these plans would deliver a viable and much-needed section of the Drummoyne-The Bays strategic cycleway corridor.

However, in the short term it is essential to deliver proper shared paths on both sides of the road with improved side street crossings - even if it means reducing space for vehicles. Obstructions such as poles, signs and bus stops need to be relocated so the path is clear.

A pedestrian and cycle crossing of Victoria Road at the signalised intersection with Roberts Street will help restore connectivity lost when the overpass bridge was removed.

Although these shared paths adjacent to 6 lanes of congested traffic will remain unattractive, noisy and polluted, the Rozelle Parklands to Moodie Street E58 route is not a realistic alternative to Victoria Road for commuter cyclists. It is essential to make the shared paths adequate while the debate about the future of Victoria Road rumbles on.

4. Introduce a default area-wide 40 km/h speed limit, and further reduce the limit to 30km/h on streets with high pedestrian activity

The existing 50km/h speed limit on streets adjacent to the Rozelle Parklands is **far too high**, given the changed character and usage of the area. The sporting and recreational venues attract many children, and the active transport links will be busy with people walking and cycling.

An **area-wide 40km/h limit** is a 'Key Project' under *Principle 2: Improve safety, personal security, and provide equitable access for full community participation* in '[Going Places](#)', Inner West Council's 2020 Integrated Transport Strategy.

A motion on the issue received unanimous support when it was brought to Council in June 2022. In 2023, Council exhibited the [Inner West @ 40](#) report, setting out rigorous data-driven evidence to support reduced speed limits. The very supportive [Bicycle NSW submission](#) provides further commentary. The report was [endorsed in March 2024](#).

The importance of this initiative cannot be overstated. Setting a 40km/h speed limit across an entire LGA is ground-breaking in scope and Inner West Council is to be commended for its ambition. Our roads are becoming less safe every year. The [road toll is rising](#). Slowing down traffic has a transformative effect on our communities. The change will significantly improve safety for everyone in the community, particularly people walking and cycling, children going to school and other vulnerable road users outside a car.

Bicycle NSW aligns with the [Better Streets](#) coalition campaign and advocates that Inner West Council **further reduces the speed limit to 30km/h** on streets with a high concentration of pedestrian activity and streets which form part of the Inner West Bicycle Network. This would include Lilyfield Road and Gordon Street. A 30 km/h speed limit facilitates on-road mixed traffic cycling in conjunction with the low-cost 'quietway' treatments outlined in the [Cycleway Design Toolbox](#).

A 30km/h speed limit was in place for Lilyfield Road during construction of Rozelle Interchange. This helped bike riders move safely through the chaos. It was incredibly disappointing that TfNSW reverted the speed limit to 50km/h.

The [NSW speed limit guidelines](#) have recently received a much-needed update. There are now official recommendations for 30km/h speed zones and it is easier for councils to implement change. Over short trips, a 30km/h speed limit makes virtually no difference in travel time.

Lower vehicle speeds make a difference to road safety. There is no time to waste.

And then:

5. Redevelop Victoria Road and Parramatta Road as multi-modal urban boulevards

Both corridors have long been earmarked for revitalisation. The [WestConnex Strategic Business Case](#) developed a place-based, integrated transport vision for Parramatta Road. This was presented as a 'core priority' for NSW Government and WestConnex. Chapter 7.1 states that "the transformation of Parramatta Road will deliver new dwellings to help address Sydney's housing needs, together with commercial, office and community developments". Department of Planning imposed [Condition B34 on the M4 East](#) project that "at least two lanes of Parramatta Road, from Burwood to Haberfield, are to be solely dedicated for the use of public transport..." None of this has happened, and the community is increasingly angry. In fact, the NSW Government is now making noises about [widening](#) the road.

Inner West Council’s draft [Rozelle Town Centre Masterplan](#) took advantage of the traffic reduction promised by the new tunnels to prioritise active and public transport on Victoria Road. The proposals reduced driving lanes from 6 to 4, lowered speed limits to 40km/h, widened footpaths and added new separated bicycle paths and landscaping. The improved amenity would facilitate mixed used development, turbocharging both economic activity and new housing supply.

We remind Transport for NSW of this excellent diagram from the 2022 [Future Transport Strategy](#).

Victoria Road and Parramatta Road offer the perfect opportunity to apply this multi-modal model.

Bicycle NSW is excited to reimagine Sydney’s unloved arterial roads. Reallocating road space for public and active transport will allow our capital city to move forward from decades of car domination.

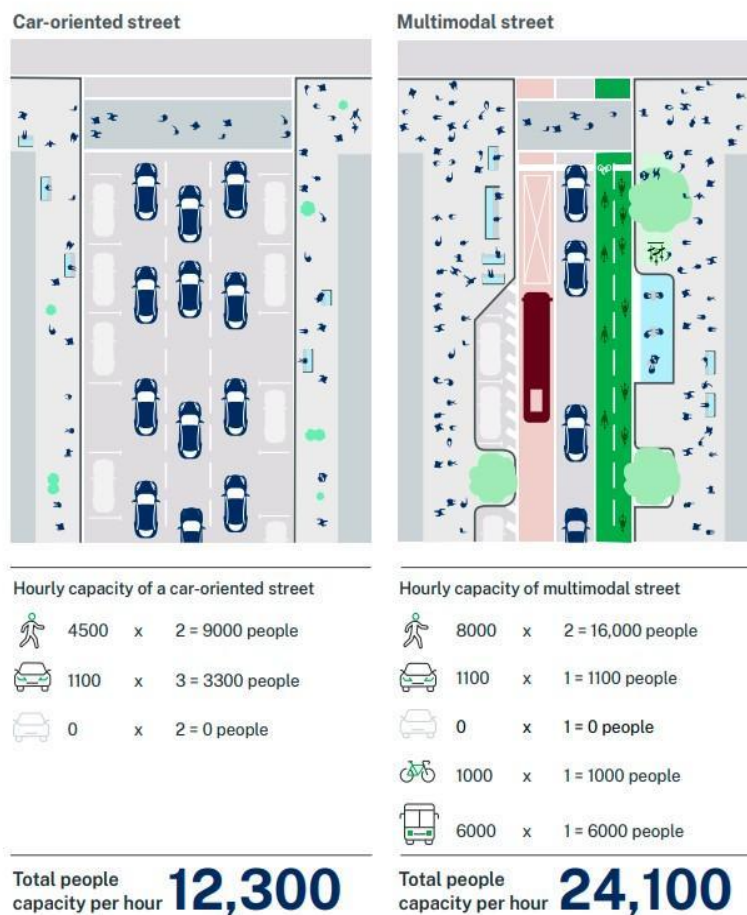


Figure 2: A key diagram from the new Future Transport Strategy that explicitly supports the reallocation of road space, comparing the total number of people moved per hour in the same amount of space on a car-oriented street and a multimodal street (Source: TfNSW)

6. Restore the Glebe Island Bridge for people walking, wheeling and cycling

It is essential to get on with this long-mooted project to improve active transport connections between the Inner West and the City. The Bays West development and the Metro West station will bring thousands of new residents and visitors to the area. They must be able to get around without adding more cars to gridlocked roads.

7. Increase funding for active transport – by a factor of 50

As set out in [our recent letter to the NSW Premier](#), NSW currently only spends 0.2% of its transport budget on active travel. This is 100 times below that recommended by the UN (20%). We ask the NSW Government to allocate 10% to walking and cycling programs over the next four years with a view to increase this investment to 20% as capability to deliver increases. Active transport infrastructure averages 4:1 to 5:1 return on investment (Queensland Government and TfNSW) due to the enormous benefits to community health, productivity, and environment.

8. Direct a fundamental shift in traffic modelling at Transport for NSW

Transport for NSW uses 3 strategic transport models, including the one that 'justified' Westconnex, but none of these can model public transport. The modellers are fixated with speeding up car traffic. But it is absurd to prioritise Level of Service for vehicles when we need to drive down emissions. And when Transport for NSW's own Road User Space Allocation Policy prioritises walking, cycling and public transport over driving.

The [business-as-usual approach](#) inevitably forecasts an increase in traffic volumes and concludes that expanded roads are required. But more roads, more traffic and more emissions don't help bike riders, pedestrians, vulnerable road users, urban amenity or biodiversity. Does it matter if the queues are slightly slower or if a journey takes one or two minutes longer in the morning peak? Why is a driver's time considered more significant? What is more important than providing bike paths or safe crossings for vulnerable users?

It is time to plan for the future we actually want.

Transport for NSW must use a multi-modal strategic model for road-based projects that takes account of impacts on buses, walking and cycling and considers all options to improve access. All infrastructure planning must be consistent with a Net Zero goal. Mode shift, reducing vehicle kilometres travelled and enabling walking and riding are critical.

9. Enshrine the 'purpose' of Transport for NSW in legislation to serve all road users

We align with, and strongly support, WalkSydney's [overarching observations and recommendations](#) to reduce the risk of another failed road expansion project.

Central to this is the legislation of a fair and equitable transport hierarchy that puts people first. People walking will be at the top of the hierarchy, then people wheeling, riding and catching public transport, then freight. Private cars, both being driven and parked, come last.

The objectives of the Road Transport Act must be amended to include the modal road user hierarchy, and a desired outcome of a 'child-friendly city'. From this will flow the consistent prioritisation of active and public transport when planning and funding city shaping projects.

In addition, NSW Government must fix the rules by which Transport, Planning and Treasury plan, consult on and assess transport projects, and legislate an independent planning inspector for state projects,

10. Stop building new and expanded motorways in the inner city

Motorways, planned on flawed models that assume annual road traffic increases, induce people to make longer and more trips. Road spending hasn't "busted congestion" but caused it. By contrast, [London](#) reduced congestion by 30% and boosted bus travel by 33% and cycling by 66% with no new roads.

Don't spend a cent more trying to relieve gridlock for cars by enlarging roads.

Road congestion cannot be solved without huge investment in public transport. As the [Mogridge Principle](#) infers, road traffic congestion levels are heavily influenced by the fixed speed of parallel public transport networks. But instead of dedicating lanes to bus trips to speed up transit, buses through Rozelle have been held up in an attempt to stop the interchange freezing up.

Chris Stapleton has made some great proposals for fairly sharing access to the 4 lanes of the Anzac Bridge. Please refer to his submission. However, traffic will gradually adjust as people make new decisions about their trips, and their home, school and workplace locations.

Ultimately, faster public transport, high quality active transport infrastructure, and urban density that reduces the need to travel are the only ways to ease congestion. Although the Western Harbour Tunnel is unfortunately still on track to plug even more traffic into the system, Sydney Metro West will eventually provide some relief.

In Conclusion

The mess at Rozelle is a wake-up call to the entrenched fiasco of roadbuilding in New South Wales. Pedestrians and cyclists have lost dearly to induce motorist demand.

Car-first thinking is so prevalent at Transport for NSW that we can't move forward with creating Better Streets and a decarbonised transport system.

A complete and systemic overhaul is required.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with Bicycle NSW if we can assist further with the Inquiry.

Yours faithfully,



Peter McLean

Chief Executive Officer
Bicycle NSW

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Hon. Jo Haylen MP	Minister for Transport
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