



To whom it may concern
WestConnex Delivery Authority
WestConnex Project
By Email: info@westconnex.com.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

re: Proposed Stage one: WestConnex: Parramatta to Haberfield M4 East

This is an objection by the Sydney and Northern NSW Branch of the Australian Garden History Society concerning the need to relocate and redesign parts of this project to avoid adverse impacts on state and local heritage landscape items in Haberfield and Ashfield.

The Society is the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action. We have around 1600 members Australia-wide with three branches in NSW.

WestConnex Stage One proposes widening the M4 to Haberfield to 3 lanes each way, with tunnel portals and ramps in Haberfield and Ashfield. Although at the preliminary design concept stage detailed maps and drawings are not provided, it appears that tunnel entry ramps and portals and additional lanes will slice off the front 10-30m (we understand 40m off *Yasmar's* 'front') of land currently (or historically) part of two state-heritage listed gardens and one arguably state-significant historic park in Haberfield and Ashfield. This is something we categorically oppose. There must be a better option and we want to see this seriously pursued.

Options such as locating tunnel entry ramps and portals further east (e.g. Taverner's Hill, Rozelle Rail Yards as in an earlier incarnation of this project) or further west (Concord, Burwood, Canada Bay or Croydon) in areas lacking the concentration of heritage items that Ashfield and Haberfield have. Another option altogether would appear to be a truck tunnel or widening of the entire length of Centenary Drive to the west, avoiding the inner west entirely – if traffic movement to the port and airport are the real goal. Of course rail freight (rather than encouraging truck movements through the city) would offer an entirely different alternative, freeing up roads for non-truck traffic. This does not appear to have been considered.

1) Reasoning for choice of 'take' lands / alignments:

Public parks and publicly-owned gardens are a public benefit that (as land gets scarcer) require the highest standard of consideration, management and avoidance of impacts, or at the very least, fair compensation to be paid enabling rehabilitation and upgrades as the result of impacts of unavoidable public infrastructure project impacts. They are not simply 'free assets' to be exploited, without the more obvious public outcry (or lobby groups) that resuming private lands

brings. WestConnex ought to be aware that many value these public assets, particularly so as urban densities increase and private open space dwindles in amount, extent and quality.

Ashfield (municipality) residents value their parks and open spaces, having less per capita than most Council areas. In addition they value historic properties with gardens occasionally open to visit, such as *Yasmar* and *The Bunyas*. *Ashfield Park* is the prime public park in the municipality. Residents don't want to see these 'chopped up' for traffic, for benefits that might be achieved in other less-damaging ways. Like serious investment in public transport, not wider roads for cars.

It appears (not from the publicly exhibited website material, but from public meetings and other sources) it is intended to take over all of *Ashfield Park* and *Reg Cody Reserve* in Haberfield for works depots, stockpiling spoil, storing machinery and batching plants – for what would appear to be up to 9 years of construction. This is completely unacceptable. Other locations must be found for such elements, particularly given the time span involved. Removing public open space for up to 9 years (with the exception of Ashfield Bowling Club) is not an option that residents will support, once they realize this is planned. So far media coverage has focused on private properties being resumed (or anxious about that possibility), ignoring public lands.

The Branch objects to the 'take public land first' approach that seems to be guiding the location of elements such as tunnel ramps, portals and entries and additional lanes. Alternative sites need to be canvassed, costed and design for such structures that do not impinge on or require adverse impacts (works, visual impacts, environmental impacts such as reduced air quality or increased noise) on historic landscapes such as *Yasmar* and *The Bunyas* in Haberfield and *Ashfield Park* need to be considered on an equal basis to private land. This does not appear to be the case with the preferred (and only) option currently presented.

2) Lack of project design detail to comment on:

The 'Preliminary Design Concept' stage is vague on detail. The Branch objects to the lack of clarity on where key elements will be and a complete absence of consideration of alternatives. We understand that a 16/12/13 public meeting hosted by Ashfield Municipal Council attracted over 400 residents, who rejected Stage one, calling for much more detail and consideration of alternative options.

We consider there is a need (well before the end of 2014 when the environmental impact assessment is ready) for detailed maps, plans and impacts to be shown on maps on the www.westconnex.com website and for more public meetings to enable the community to understand precise on-ground impacts, e.g. where will the 3 ventilation stacks, tunnel entries/exits, i.e. portals, ramps, construction site compounds, stock piles, batching plants, machinery stores and proposed mitigation measures such as sound walls be? And have an opportunity to suggest alternative locations or resolution. This could save the project money!

It would appear that 6-8 lanes (once widened) of Parramatta Road east to Haberfield will then be 'pinch-pointed' to two lanes each way east of Liverpool Road, with obvious 'constriction points' at Battle Bridge (another heritage item). It is unclear how this 'choke point' will be managed, or transitions between the two dealt with to avoid bottlenecks (much the same as currently occurs at the now-eastern Strathfield North end of the M2, meeting Parramatta Road. All Stage one will achieve will be moving that bottleneck a few suburbs east. Not a solution!

We understand WestConnex has sent out packages to pre-tenderer companies before even preparing or making public an environmental Impact assessment. That presupposes the concept will be built as it is, with little room for relocation or redesign on wider consultation and review. That seems at best unwise and likely to cause 'blow outs' on budget.

We also understand that Ashfield Local Environmental Plan was gazetted by the NSW Minister for Planning before Christmas 2013, listing additional local heritage items on Parramatta Road, for instance east of Ashfield Park.

Avoidance of adverse impacts on these new heritage items need to be considered in Stage One documentation along with all existing heritage items.

3) Detailed concerns:

Branch concerns focus on avoiding any adverse impacts to three major state-significant 'garden' heritage items in Haberfield and Ashfield deserving far better treatment and understanding.

A) *Yasmar*, 185 Parramatta Road, Haberfield loses up to 40m of front garden, having its front gates and fence moved for 'cut and fill', then a 'lid' and a form of 'roof garden' for a tunnel ramp and portal

This site was home to the Learmonth /Ramsay family who once owned the whole peninsula of what is now called Haberfield. Its site is a rare (unique?) example of a (the only?) mid-19th century suburban villa in its garden setting on Parramatta Road – our oldest road (1792) – that remains in relatively intact condition. Such estates within 5km of Sydney are now all-but-extinct – subdivision leading to the loss of former component elements such as orchards, cow or horse paddocks, stables, kitchen or vegetable gardens, pleasure grounds.

Yasmar's large and diverse 'gardenesque' garden with curving drive, formal gates and richly planted shrubberies has a plant collection outstanding in richness, with some species otherwise only known from the *Royal Botanic Garden* or *Camden Park estate*. Even if *Yasmar's* gates have been moved in the past, its land parcel is relatively intact and its presence as a thickly-vegetated 'forest' of a garden is in sharp contrast to much of the inner-western extent of Parramatta Road. This needs respecting and conserving. Not digging up for 'cut and cover'.

Elements framing and contributing to this sense of 'historic suburban villa garden', with grand gates, drive, entry forecourt etc – need to be conserved and interpreted to the community. Not dug up and 'recreated' on top of a tunnel roof, poorly. That makes a mockery of heritage conservation and runs contrary to good conservation practice per the ICOMOS Burra Charter.

It appears some 40m of *Yasmar's* front garden, including entry area, outer and inner fences, gates, drive and shrubberies east and west of the drive (including large and significant trees and shrubs, some extremely rare) for a distance of 40m in from Parramatta Road's current verge are to be dug up and lost, for a 'cut and fill' tunnel, then 'roofed' and in some form 'replanted'. Again this is not clear from the project website material, but has been gleaned from public meetings. We suggest the public is barely, if at all, aware of this proposed outcome.

No new (i.e. eventually to reach at maturity) 30-40m high trees can be supported on the type of 'roof' likely to be built on top of a tunnel or ramp. What will be destroyed could not be recreated on such a substrate to any convincing degree. We note that the Palmer Street ramp 'roof' at Potts Point (part of the Eastern Distributor tunnel feeder network) has concrete and no 'planting'

at all on top of it. Is that the realistic outcome envisaged for *Yasmar*? That is completely unacceptable given its garden is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register, as a garden, rich in original and early plantings, including of large (and rare) trees, shrubs and more. No such replacement planting or outcome can be achieved on top of a tunnel ramp roof.

As *Yasmar* is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register, the Heritage Council of NSW must be consulted and have early input into Stage one options and detailed resolution. In addition to *Yasmar* being so-listed, the suburb of Haberfield as a whole has been nominated for consideration for listing on the NSW State Heritage Register – it is that significant.

In addition *Yasmar*'s 'sunken garden' in its western shrubbery may be impacted by this '40m take'. Given this is an extremely rare surviving early water feature, pond / sunken garden / shade house its removal (and later presumed reconstruction) is completely unacceptable. Fragile structures like this should be conserved and repaired, not dismantled and poorly reconstructed on top of tunnel ramp roofs.

This 'cut and fill' tunnel ramp needs relocation outside *Yasmar*'s grounds. We suggest directly across Parramatta Road is a large vacant site eminently suitable for such a structure with no adverse impact on *Yasmar*'s garden. That or other locations need to be considered in the EIS.

At the very least funds to enable upgrading of the public presentation of *Yasmar*'s southern, main Parramatta Road frontage and the public must be a 'deliverable' outcome of WestConnex. Any proposed sound walls between it and Parramatta Road would have to be sensitively designed and detailed to avoid 'shutting off' public views and appreciation of its front garden.

Improved fencing, planting and maintenance are a minor benefit the project could bring, for some community gains. Identification and consideration of alternatives such as pushing the land-take southwards across Parramatta Road off *Yasmar* should be considered and costed.

B) *Ashfield Park* has its front (northern edge) 10-20m sliced off for tunnel ramp/ portal entry/ies and will be 'locked up' (except the Bowling Club) as spoil stockpiles, works depot, machinery store and batching plant – for up to 9 years!

Ashfield Park is a delightful and relatively rich, intact Federation era 1904 public park formed from an 1885 Crown land purchase in response to agitation by local groups (e.g. the Bowling Club, which occupies its north-west) and individuals. It faces Parramatta Road and many know it from carpet bedding with colourful annual displays picking out the name: "*Ashfield Park*" to motorists and pedestrians. That bedding and lawn terrace on which it sits (20-30m it seems) would be entirely sliced off for a (the Marrickville Truck) tunnel ramp currently proposed.

It seems the project's three-stage approach means that Stage 3's Petersham access ramps will make this *Ashfield* tunnel ramp redundant – so why sacrifice any park land at all? Why not move the ramp east (e.g. Taverner's Hill) or west (Croydon/Burwood/Strathfield) to avoid adverse impact on *Ashfield Park*? Have alternative options such as this been considered to avoid direct adverse impacts? If not why not consider them, now?

Ashfield Park is listed as a local heritage item on *Ashfield Local Environmental Plan*, but in the Branch's view it should be listed on the NSW State Heritage Register. Relatively intact inner-

urban suburban parks from the great 1880s era of municipal park creation (celebrating the centenary of NSW's colonization) like this are increasingly rare and lack the heritage recognition they deserve. Every effort should be made to avoid adverse impacts on *Ashfield Park*.

If (as a last resort) some 'cut' into the park was unavoidable, the treatment of this edge, with retaining walls, sound walls or similar would need the utmost care in sensitive design and detailing to ensure public appreciation of the park, and park users' appreciation of it from 'inside' were not diminished by excessive height or ugly monumental walls, cutting off connection.

The cutting off of pedestrian access to *Ashfield Park* from Haberfield by a wider, deeper 'trench/tunnel' of Parramatta Road would need to be addressed by either a pedestrian bridge or set of lights – otherwise Haberfield residents using the park will struggle to do so in future.

We totally reject the proposal (again not evident on your website concept plan but gleaned from public meetings) that the park will be 'commandeered' for spoil stockpiling, works depot, machinery storage and batching plant, for up to 9 years. That is completely unacceptable, robbing the residents of Ashfield and Haberfield of their principal open space (except bowlers!). Alternative sites must be found for these elements. We understand that *Reg Cody Reserve* in Haberfield is also slated for a works depot – again something completely unacceptable.

3) *The Bunyas*, 5 Rogers Avenue, Haberfield – regains a 'frontage' to Parramatta road, but loses its privacy and gains traffic much closer, sound walls, noise etc

This house was built in 1904-7 for real estate agent and entrepreneur developer Richard Stanton as his own home in his model garden suburb of Haberfield. It is sited on the location of the former homestead of *Dobroyde Estate* (which he had progressively bought and subdivided to make Haberfield), contains an exemplar Arts & Crafts house and large garden once fronting Parramatta Road on a ridge line for district views (in – that is, of it; and out – from it).

Its garden once stretched east to Dalhousie Street and south to Parramatta Road. After the Stanton family left it was subdivided in 1928 (leading to the existing car yard to the south and blocks of flats to the east). Unsurprisingly given its name, the garden retains Bunya pines (as does *Yasmar*) which, planted on a ridge, are visible from some distance away. These sit in still-spacious generous grounds with expansive lawns and other established trees including figs, Illawarra flame tree, jacaranda, desert fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*), jelly palm (*Butia capitata*) and Cocos Island/Queen palms (*Syragus romanzoffianum*). WestConnex will remove that car yard, which perhaps is a public benefit, opening up community views to *The Bunyas* again. Of course this also removes much of the privacy enjoyed by its inhabitants.

Having greatly increased traffic flows much closer to the house and garden would be an adverse impact on the 'private enjoyment' of *The Bunyas*, perhaps outweighing any public benefit of others being able to more easily 'see into' it. Any proposed sound walls between *The Bunyas* and Parramatta Road would have to be sensitively designed, scaled and detailed to avoid overly 'shutting in' its inhabitants, shutting off public views, and diminishing any potential 'gains' of public appreciation of its front garden presentation to the road.

The Branch might be prepared to accept that outcome if there were more detail about how this new 'front' will be treated. We trust that there will be no high, bleak and blunt sound walls to

Parramatta Road, no overly-urban treatment of what for much of the last 190 years has either been woodland, paddock or leafy front garden. When will such detail be available to view? Will options to treat this 'front' sensitively to retain some privacy for the owners of *The Bunyas*, yet allow the community to 'see' The Bunyas' roof and garden from Parramatta Road be published?

The Bunyas is listed on its NSW state heritage register listing and thus the Heritage Council of NSW should have early opportunity to provide input on this project to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on the property and ensure some benefit to the setting of The Bunyas ensues.

We do not oppose the project, merely the choice of location for some elements of it, which seem to be doing the most to adversely affect some of the greatest concentration of heritage elements and areas along its route. In our view this is completely avoidable, by serious consideration of alternative locations firstly, and by redesign and treatment secondly.

We trust the above comments are of help in preparing the Environmental Impact Statement and finalising details for the project.

We look forward to seeing more detailed information and further opportunities to make comment in due course.

Yours sincerely



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Sydney & Northern NSW Branch
Australian Garden History Society
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