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For Immediate Release

SENATE CALL FOR WESTCONNEX AND PERTH FREIGHT LINK AUDIT WELCOMED BUT MORE ACTION URGENTLY NEEDED

Yarra Campaign for Action on Transport (VIC), WestCONnex Action Group (NSW) and Rethink The Link (WA) welcomed the motion passed by the Australian Senate on Wednesday 3 February calling for a Federal audit into WestCONnex and the Perth Freight Link.

But the groups said this needed to be matched by urgent action to halt Federal support for the billion-dollar toll roads to stop taxpayer dollars being wasted.

“In Melbourne, a fiercely determined community campaign fought back at every step against East West Link being imposed upon our city,” said Chris Star of Yarra Campaign for Action on Transport.

“Thankfully in 2014 after the Victorian State Election, the Andrews Government listened and cancelled this monstrosity.

“Two separate audits were tabled in December 2015 by the Victorian Auditor General’s Office and Australian National Audit Office of the doomed East-West Link toll road – and they were scathing.

“But any audit of Perth Freight Link and WestCONnex cannot be simply an administrative function. It must have teeth.

“And it must be accompanied by a commitment to halt Federal funding for both toll roads until the audit has taken place,” said Ms Star.

“We’ve always said the \$16.8 billion WestCONnex has all the hallmarks of a dirty project – no transparency, escalating costs, corrupted planning processes, contracts signed before approvals are granted – so a Federal audit into this sham is well overdue,” said WestCONnex Action Group spokesperson Pauline Lockie.

“But an audit could take up to a year – and the Baird Government is gearing up to destroy large parts of Sydney for this taxpayer-funded toll road within months.

“If Prime Minister Turnbull is serious about investing in infrastructure on its merits, he should also be pushing for this audit – and immediately halt Federal funding for WestCONnex until this audit is done,” said Ms Lockie.

“The WA government has hidden behind commercial in-confidence from the start of this ill-conceived project, so shining a light into the Barnett Government’s secrecy and incompetence can’t come soon enough,” said Rethink The Link coordinator Kim Dravnieks.

“But with nearly \$1 billion of Federal taxpayer money committed to this project, it’s critical that Prime Minister Turnbull halts this support until any such audit has taken place.”

With a Federal election expected later this year, the groups have pledged to work together to oppose these unpopular, costly and destructive toll road projects.

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