



The Hon Barry O'Farrell MP

Premier of NSW

Minister for Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

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BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE: GO AHEAD FOR NORTHCONNEX MOTORWAY

The NSW Government has reached an agreement with Transurban and the Westlink M7 shareholders to deliver the NorthConnex motorway – twin nine kilometre tunnels to link the M1 and M2 under busy Pennant Hills Road.

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell and Roads Minister Duncan Gay said subject to planning approval, NorthConnex would be a major freight route for eastern Australia and allow trucks to effectively bypass Sydney.

"This is a project that has long been talked about but will become a reality under Liberal & Nationals Federal and NSW Governments," Mr O'Farrell said at the announcement, where he was joined by Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Assistant Infrastructure Minister Jamie Briggs.

"NorthConnex will significantly ease traffic congestion in Sydney by taking up to 5,000 trucks a day off Pennant Hills Road, while vehicles using the tunnel will bypass 21 sets of traffic lights.

"This link will provide a continuous motorway between the Hunter and Central Coast and Western and South Western Sydney and be a quicker alternative for journeys between the Central Coast, Hunter and Sydney's CBD.

"NorthConnex will make it possible to travel by road from Newcastle to Canberra and Melbourne without encountering a single traffic light.

"We are building for the future by constructing the tunnel with a capacity for three lanes of traffic each way.

"The more efficient movement of freight will deliver major benefits to the Australian and NSW economies.

"By removing thousands of trucks a day from surface roads we will improve the lives of tens of thousands of people living near Pennant Hills Road.

"The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government is getting on with the job of delivering the transport infrastructure Sydney desperately needs having committed to WestConnex and NorthConnex, the North West Rail Link, M5 West widening, CBD and South East Light Rail and fast-tracked the South West Rail Link in our first term.

"I congratulate Prime Minister Tony Abbott who has again shown his determination and commitment to work with the NSW Government to deliver the vital infrastructure to get Sydney moving again."

In March 2012, the NSW Government received an unsolicited proposal from Transurban and the Westlink M7 shareholders to design, build, operate, maintain and finance NorthConnex.

On 30 May 2013 the NSW Government announced the proposal had progressed to Stage 3 of the unsolicited proposals process, which would include a competitive tender to select a design and construction contractor.

The \$3 billion project, consisting of a construction budget of \$2.65 billion in addition to land and project delivery costs, will be funded through toll charges with a contribution from the NSW and Australian Governments of up to \$405 million each. Car and truck tolls for NorthConnex will be aligned with the M2, which currently are \$6.11 for cars and \$18.32 for trucks.

Under the preferred design released today, the twin tunnels will link the southern end of the M1 Motorway at Wahroonga to the Hills M2 Motorway at its Pennant Hills Road interchange.

Vehicles connecting to or from the M2 East will benefit from easier and less congested traffic at the M2/Pennant Hills Road interchange. As part of the future-proofing of NorthConnex, the motorway will be designed and constructed to allow direct connections to the M2 East to be added in the future if required. Based on forecast traffic figures these connections are not required for a number of decades.

Mr Gay said the preferred design demonstrated innovation, value for taxpayers and was environmentally responsible while minimising impacts on local communities.

“Today I’m delighted to announce that, following a competitive process, a preferred tenderer to design and construct the motorway has been chosen and is a joint venture between Lend Lease and Bouygues.

“The project will now go out for the next stage of community consultation and a formal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which is expected to be on display for comment by the middle of this year.

“Subject to planning approval, construction on the project could start within 12 months and be completed in 2019.

“Built with a three lane capacity but initially line-marked for two lanes each way, the tunnels are expected to deliver improved travel times of up to 15 minutes.

“Importantly, we are honouring our commitment and there will be no funnelling of cars into the tunnel.

“Pennant Hills Road has six lanes of traffic, which currently carry about 80,000 vehicles each day including 10,000 heavy vehicles – more than double the average proportion of heavy vehicles on NSW roads.

“At least 30 per cent of the light vehicles and 50 per cent of the heavy vehicles currently using Pennant Hills Road are forecast to use the NorthConnex tunnel.

“The tunnel height has been increased to 5.3 metres, significantly higher than the 4.6 metres of most other tunnels in Sydney which reduces the possibility of overheight trucks playing Russian roulette with our road network,” Mr Gay said.