

**Public Works Committee: Inquiry into the Impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link**  
**Hearing 27 September 2021**

**Supplementary questions**  
**Responses from Infrastructure NSW**

**Question**

1. Mr Draper stated he did not believe that COVID-19 accelerated changes would affect the business case in the long term. This is contrary to recent advice by Infrastructure Australia and the Productivity Commission around major infrastructure projects. What research can Infrastructure NSW point to that supports Mr Draper's assertion?
  - a. Given the work centres of the North Shore and City served by the project do you think no impact is realistic?

**Response**

There is currently very little data on the impact of COVID in the medium term and no data for the long-term impacts over the life of an asset such as Western Harbour Tunnel. As such, research to date is largely speculative and revision of the business case based on this data would lack robustness.

It should be noted that the question preceding the response referred to in the above question related to COVID modelling on people working from home. As stated at the hearing, a project like the Western Harbour Tunnel is not an asset which is heavily reliant on people travelling into CBDs to go to offices; it is part of a motorway network involved in moving goods and materials around the state and around the city.

The Infrastructure Australia report '*COVID Impacts on Infrastructure Sectors*' states:

- There has been some peak spreading on public transport, but more intense peaks on road corridors, suggesting commuters shifted to private car use
- If the shift towards private vehicle use remains once pre-COVID-19 CBD volumes return, there could be a significant increase in congestion
- Traffic data implies that road transport is nearly back to pre-COVID-19 levels after initial reductions in traffic on major arterial corridors
- The geographical distribution of last mile trips shifted heavily away from CBDs to residential and local areas
- Australia's merchandise imports have remained relatively stable despite air-freight volumes dropping, suggesting an increase in road and rail freight.

Since the Infrastructure Australia report was released, there has been significant progress in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccination rates are now at very high levels with commensurate falls in infections and severity of illness, many jurisdictions have 'reopened', Australia has reopened international borders and new treatments for COVID-19 have been approved (both preventative and remedial). These developments allow a view to a future where COVID-19 itself will not dominate behaviour and where, instead, other long-term trends are likely to be more important in determining demand and usage of infrastructure and services.

**Question**

2. In Mr Draper's submission he said that the business case for the Beaches Link Tunnel was in preparation, and from this it can be assumed it has not been submitted to the cabinet or the Expenditure Review Committee. On Saturday 2 October, in an article in the Daily Telegraph by Linda Silimalis and Annette Sharp, the claim was made that the Premier was becoming "pushy", including "suggesting at a meeting of the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) that approval be given to proceed with the Beaches Link Tunnel project." If Mr Draper states that the business case has not been submitted to the ERC, has other documentation containing the Business Case for the Beaches Link Tunnel been provided to the ERC?
  - a. If this document has not been submitted by Infrastructure NSW, which government agency prepared and submitted the business case to the ERC?

**Response**

Preparation and submission of the business case is a matter for Transport for NSW and the Minister for Transport.

**Question**

3. The community have raised concerns that the stated travel time savings are not plausible - what validation of travel time savings have been completed?
  - a. Has validation of these times been provided to INSW given a bulk of the financial benefits of the project are travel times?

**Response**

Infrastructure NSW does provide Assurance on business cases but the proceedings of the Assurance review process, including the documentation provided to the review team, are Cabinet in Confidence. This question should be directed to Transport for NSW.

**Question**

4. WHO has stated that any increase in air pollution has a cost to human health - was the cost of increased air pollution to 20,000 children included in the BCR?

**Response**

This is a matter for Transport for NSW. Infrastructure NSW has not undertaken the BCR for this project. Proceedings of the Assurance review process are Cabinet in Confidence.

**Question**

5. Two way tolling has been earmarked in the EIS for all Harbour Crossings - what modelling has been done to predict the inevitable impacts of toll avoidance on workers unable to avoid two way tolling by the Beaches Link or WestConnex?

**Response**

This question should be directed to Transport for NSW as the agency responsible for the EIS.

**Question**

6. Have you had any conversations or directives from Ms Berejiklian regarding these projects?
  - a. If yes, please provide records of these meetings and/or conversations.

**Response**

Infrastructure NSW representatives have not had discussions with or directives from Ms Berejiklian regarding these projects. Please note that any discussions in Cabinet relating to Assurance reporting are Cabinet in Confidence.

**Question**

7. Do you acknowledge that the EIS demonstrates that a substantial number of intersections across the North Shore have the same level of delay or poorer intersection performance as a result of the project?
  - a. Do you acknowledge that this indicates that surface level traffic does not improve as claimed by the project but rather deteriorates?

**Response**

This question should be directed to Transport for NSW as the agency responsible for the EIS.

**Question**

8. Mr Draper stated that the Sydney Metro City & Southwest project provides public transport that complements the expansion of car and freight capacity by road through the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link project,- and this is why investments in both projects were simultaneously announced. Will the complementary 'public transport' capacity assumed to be provided by Sydney Metro be privatised in whole or part?

**Response**

This would be a policy matter for the NSW Government.