

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTERN HARBOUR  
TUNNEL AND BEACHES LINK**

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 26 May 2021

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Partially  
Confidential

**Cover Page: Objection to Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link Tunnel:**

Terms of Reference consulted: comments particularly for items (a), (b), (g), (j) and (m)

- **Business Plan. Viz. Beaches Link Tunnel.** Such has not been released for public scrutiny for this extensive project. Private enterprise would be pilloried for such remissness. The Government must be both accountable and transparent, especially as Covid-19 has changed commuting habits.
  - (i) Tax Payers money is being spent.
  - (ii) This project will affect the lives of tens of thousands of Sydney citizens for five (5+) years.
- **Totally Inappropriate Primary Dig Site for Beaches Link:** The proposed site is in Flat Rock Gully on the eastern side of Flat Rock Drive, bordering suburbs of Northbridge, Willoughby South, Naremburn and Cammeray. It is totally unsuitable. This site was a toxic rubbish dump containing asbestos and various other nasties; it is presently stabilised by well-established 25 year old bushland.
- **Health.** Released carcinogens, toxins and gases from this site would adversely affect the Health of adjacent densely populated suburban areas, as well as those afar, by virtue of the Sydney Basin geography and the related air inversion phenomenon which occurs from time to time.
- **Pollution** from diesel fumes, dust, car exhaust etc. from the site, would present additional health hazards. Such air borne pollution would be invasive, pervasive and wide spread.
- **Destruction** of Bushland/open green space, is contrary to NSW Government's own guidelines.  
Reference:
- **Greener Public Spaces-NSW Department of Planning.** Viz.
- [www.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Open-space-and-parklands](http://www.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Open-space-and-parklands)  
And
- **Greener Public Spaces-NSW Government.** Viz.
- [www.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/greener-public-spaces#](http://www.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities/greener-public-spaces#)
- **Climate Change.** Destruction of bushland and trees leads to an atmospheric increase in the concentration of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>-- normally absorbed by trees); this in turn increases temperature leading to climate change.
- **Water quality** of both Flat Rock Gully Creek and Middle Harbour will be severely compromised.
- **Water Table:** proposed removal of enormous volumes of underground water to aid boring will result in water table depletion, probably causing subsidence and possible movement in buildings.
- **Traffic.** 70 heavy duty vehicles **every hour** on Flat Rock Drive will totally disrupt traffic movement on **all** of the Lower North Shore. Eastern Valley Way and Sailors Bay Rd. Northbridge, leading onto Flat Rock Drive, are chosen routes to and from the Middle and Upper North Shore, for traffic for either of the Sydney Harbour crossings. Flat Rock Drive, one of only two routes for entry/exit for Northbridge, a peninsula, will be severely compromised. Local traffic must also be factored in.
- **Local Businesses.** It is very likely businesses located at the western end of Northbridge would become unviable and so annihilated, due to lack of patronage caused by traffic congestion. Shopping in Northbridge will just be too hard. Alternate shopping sites will be preferable and patronized.
- **Damage to Property.** Tunnelling effects such as vibration and wall cracking in buildings above the tunnel path are a real possibility, as is subsidence. (refer water table item above).
- **Public Transport expansion** should be a considered option for moving residents from the Northern Beaches to existing transport hubs, as well as increasing already existing services.
- **Rail Service.** This option appears not to have been canvassed. This is the most effective way to move large numbers of people quickly and efficiently and largely pollution free.

Northbridge NSW 2063.  
26th May 2021.

Dear Parliamentary Inquiry Committee,

I am a resident of Northbridge, Sydney.

I am particularly concerned about the proposed **Primary Dig Site of Flat Rock Gully** as part of the Beaches Link Tunnel section of the WHTBL project. I believe this site is totally inappropriate. I also believe an alternate main excavation point must be sought if this project is to proceed.

Digging Flat Rock Gully jeopardises health, sanity, treasured bushland and wildlife; all are all intertwined.

### **(A) Business Plan.**

A Business Plan has not been released for public scrutiny for the project as a whole.

While an additional harbour crossing (Western Harbour Tunnel) could be argued, the Beaches Link section has no valid argument.

This is especially so in light of the effects the Corona virus Covid-19 has had on many workers who previously commuted. Thousands of people, possibly tens of thousands of people, are now working from home, markedly reducing the volume of traffic on Sydney roads.

The stated cost of \$16 billion is only a guestimate. The magnitude of the real figure is an unknown. The cost of such a project, with respect to benefits derived from the Beaches Link section, is both unproven and questionable. The necessity for such infrastructure is debatable, especially now in a post Covid-19 world when so many business practices have changed. Viability of this project must receive post Covid scrutiny.

Reassessment is necessary, not only because of Covid-19, but also as Tax Payers' money is involved; the completed infrastructure will likely be sold to private enterprise.

Should such a sale occur, it would complete the total ownership by private enterprise (**one** only company... a monopoly?) of the road System of Sydney. Allowing such an iron grip on Sydney's arterial road system is very dangerous indeed.

### **(B) Inappropriate Primary Dig Site for Beaches Link.**

My main concern with the Beaches Link is the choice of **Flat Rock Gully** as the primary dig site. A different Primary Dig Site is a necessity and must be found if this project is to proceed and is to have any public credence.

There are three **big** problems with Flat Rock Gully as the primary dig site; there are also ancillary problems.

- (i) **Health** issues.....many factors.
- (ii) **Environment loss**. ....destruction of established bushland is entirely **contrary** to the NSW Government's own dictum and is total hypocrisy; there are related negatives.
- (iii) **Traffic chaos** and mayhem, as well as numerous ancillary problems.

#### **(i) Health**

Flat Rock Gully as the name implies, is a gully akin to a valley. Geographically it is much lower than the surrounding land. This height differential presents problems. The proposed Primary Dig Site in Flat Rock Gully borders Northbridge, Cammeray, Naremburn and Willoughby South, all **densely populated** residential suburbs.

The nominated dig area is a former toxic rubbish dump established on the site of an old quarry which produced Sydney sandstone. The site is believed to contain, amongst other things, asbestos, hospital waste, household waste of varying types, including building materials such as “fibro”, an asbestos based building product.

The rubbish tip was filled in to contain the contaminants. Site stability has been realized by planting hundreds of trees and ancillary plants. These plantings occurred circa 25 years ago; the area now is an established, thriving, well maintained and well patronized bushland and recreational area.

### **Health (cont.)**

Excavation of the site is only possible by

- destroying hectares of bushland containing trees and vegetation (excess of 400 trees to be bulldozed)
- breaching the hitherto stable “soil”  
This would result in
- release of **Pollutants:**  
Such would be gaseous emissions from putrescence of a previous rubbish tip, various types of toxins as well as the carcinogens of asbestos and silica (boring Sydney sandstone) to be dispersed as fine airborne particles.
- **Long term health consequences** of airborne transmission of asbestos and silica are the fatal lung diseases of mesothelioma and silicosis. Such particles can be trapped in the gully; additionally and conversely, different weather conditions and prevailing winds could disperse the particles. Detrimental concentration of these particles could affect all of Sydney due to the geography of the Sydney Basin and the Air Inversion phenomenon which occurs reasonably regularly.

**Shorter term health problems** would be attributable to the pollutants caused by:

- Dust from the excavation site.
- Diesel emissions from **70 heavy duty trucks per hour** grinding up the **steep** southern bank and incline of Flat Rock Gully,\* basically six days a week.
- Car exhaust generally, as well as that exacerbated by the inability of private motor vehicles to proceed in a timely manner. Road congestion caused by above truck movements on Flat Rock Drive in Flat Rock Gully will impede movement. Please also refer to my assessment regarding Traffic.

\*Diesel engines and diesel fuel produce pollutants which include Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>); these are present in the air as ultrafine particles. Both of these can be inhaled deep into the lungs. From there, they can be absorbed into the blood stream, where they can remain embedded, possibly indefinitely. Everyone, especially those living in close proximity to Flat Rock Gully, is a candidate to inhale this pollution with resultant and ongoing health problems.

**Diesel exhaust** is particularly carcinogenic. Evidence is that DNA damage (basic building block of life) and mutations caused by diesel pollution, occur in sperm. The next generation is immediately in jeopardy too.

**Car exhaust/road traffic emissions** also contain Nitrogen Dioxide which in addition to the above mentioned health problems, can cause

- Inflammation of the respiratory system.
- Respiratory infection and wheezing.
- Respiratory disease, linked to severe asthma.
- Related respiratory conditions requiring hospitalisation.
- Respiratory disease can lead to heart disease.

The **actual excavation** at the proposed site is to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week for five (5) + years.

**Removal** of the resulting spoil is proposed for six days a week; viz. five days a week for 11 hours per day and on Saturdays for six hours.

This equates to

- Full time exposure for local residents to tens of thousands of truck movements.
- All residents would be subjected to unacceptable levels of pollutants virtually every single day for an unacceptably long time of five (5) + years.
- Health for all would be compromised.
- The damage to health would not be reversible.
- Adverse health outcomes from pollutants include heart conditions, high blood pressure (death a possibility), diabetes, respiratory problems as already stated, reduced breathing capacity and lung cancer.

An additional factor affecting **Health** would be the pervasive **NOISE** generated by **770 diesel truck movements every day** (70x11) x 5 days plus Saturday = **4,270 truck movements in any one week**, traversing the steep southern incline of Flat Rock Gully. This equates to **222,040 truck movements per calendar year** continuing for **five (5) or more** years. The sanity of residents in the immediate vicinity would certainly be at risk.

**Health** wise, this proposed project will disproportionally affect children and young people, both during the five+ years of construction, and into the future. Children are particularly susceptible to traffic pollutants, by virtue of their large lung area, compared with the size of the rest of their body.

Approximately one third (1/3) of the population of the four dense residential suburbs immediately surrounding Flat Rock Gully, are children and young people aged 0-19 years.

This is reflected by the presence, in the general area, of

32 Primary and High schools

32 Pre-Schools.

Unwitting candidates for impacted health problems would be children from various parts of Sydney together with their parents and grandparents (as spectators), who would frequent the Flat Rock Diamond Baseball Courts for sport. This sport area is adjacent to the proposed dig site, on the western side of Flat Rock Drive.

### **(ii) Environmental loss. Destruction of Bushland.**

Flat Rock Gully Bushland, including the catchment, is an area of approximately 14 hectares.

Several hectares of this are the proposed dig site, on the eastern side of Flat Rock Drive, flanked by Sailors Bay Road on the northern side of Flat Rock Gully and Market St/Dawson St on the southern side.

As previously stated, this area is a former rubbish dump which has been filled in and stabilized over a period of 25 years, by planting hundreds of trees and plants.

The trees of all different species have reached maturity. The Eucalyptus varieties are magnificent. Their white trunks stand tall and straight and true. The wattle trees in late winter and spring are a delight to meet the eye. These and other trees are home to many species of birds, including the threatened Powerful Owl.

Other arboreal animals also call Flat Rock Gully home, as do the wallabies and all types of invertebrates. It is an area of great natural beauty and great serenity, an area to heal the soul, so is **invaluable for positive mental health.**

Destruction of this bushland would result in the loss of habitat for many animals and birds resulting in death for many, displacement for others, probably resulting in their death too. Many animals are territorial. Destruction of this bushland would result in wrenching from the soil of 400 or more trees.

Flat Rock Gully is an ideal and highly desirable recreational area for all age groups including mothers pushing prams to soothe unsettled babies and young children.

Flat Rock Gully presently provides

- Serenity: excellent for mental health.
- many bush paths
- walking tracks
- bike tracks and pathways
- dog walking areas
- running tracks
- all of the above excellent for physical health
- animal life
- bird life
- plant life
- the actual Flat Rock Creek
- waterfalls

**Destruction of this environment** of Flat Rock Gully absolutely would be an enormous recreational loss to countless local residents as well as visitors from other parts of Sydney. I have met people in Flat Rock Gully who are residents of Croydon and Rushcutters Bay; they have specifically “crossed the bridge” to visit this magnificent area.

Such desecration and destruction of bushland would contribute to **Climate Change**.

Trees and plants absorb Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere and release Oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>) back into the atmosphere.

Without the trees, or less trees, our “green lungs”, this exchange would be greatly diminished; increased carbon dioxide levels equate to increased temperature, leading to adverse change in our climate.

**Such destruction of vegetation would fly in the face of the Government’s own dictum of Preserving and increasing green open space.**

**The Metropolitan Green Space Program**, released 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021 is detailed at the web address

<http://planning.nsw.gov.au/metropolitan-greenspace-program>

Please also refer to two (2) other government web sites on this subject as detailed on my Cover Page.

- **Greener Public Spaces-NSW Department of Planning.** Viz.
- [www.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Open-space-and-parklands](http://www.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Open-space-and-parklands)  
And
- **Greener Public Spaces-NSW Government.** Viz.
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The proposal within this project, is to divert Flat Rock Creek, in Flat Rock Gully, in two places.

- The water of Flat Rock Creek is a source for life for the animals and birds, as well as plant life.
- The staggering volume of 711 kilolitres of water **per day** is estimated to be necessary for this project for tunnelling; this is approximately the equivalent of two (2) Olympic sized swimming pools, every single day.
- This volume of water is to be drawn from both Flat Rock Creek and from the underground water in the underlying Water Table.
- Removal of such enormous volumes of water **daily** will likely result in local land subsidence, a threat to both Flat Rock Gully and surrounding land containing buildings and houses.
- The resulting contaminated/polluted water is to be released back into Flat Rock Creek, which then acts as the vector for polluted water flowing firstly into Sailors Bay then into Middle Harbour and finally into Sydney Harbour.

Using Flat Rock Gully as an excavation site would

- totally contradict the government's own policy on Green Open Space
- result in Health problems, both immediate and ongoing
- result in the loss of hectares of established Bushland
- result in the death of birds, animals and plants
- result in depleted water table
- result in contaminated water entering Sydney Harbour
- result in loss of valued recreational areas
- result in possible land subsidence with building movement
- contribute to Climate Change

**(iii) Traffic: Chaos and mayhem: Accidents, possibly deaths.**

Traffic from the Middle and Upper North Shore has four main routes to travel south and return north.

(i) The already overcrowded **Pacific Highway**.

(ii) **Willoughby Road, Willoughby**, a suburb immediately adjacent to Northbridge (route from the north, Archbold Rd to Penshurst St to Willoughby Rd to freeway (Sydney Harbour Tunnel or Sydney Harbour Bridge), to City, Eastern Suburbs, Airport, suburbs further south or west.)

(iii) **Flat Rock Drive Northbridge** (route from the north, Archbold Rd, Eastern Valley Way, **Sailors Bay Rd west**, to Flat Rock Drive, to the freeway (Sydney Harbour Tunnel or Sydney Harbour Bridge etc. etc.)

(iv) For (iii) above, **Flat Rock Drive** using **Sailors Bay Rd east**, then **Strathallen Av., Northbridge** in lieu of Flat Rock Drive, to the freeway (Sydney Harbour Tunnel or Sydney Harbour Bridge etc. etc.)

(v) **The Northern Beaches area also uses Eastern Valley Way Northbridge** (via Warringah Freeway) and so either Flat Rock Drive or Strathallen Av, once in Northbridge.

- The above mentioned routes deliver enormous volumes of traffic to Northbridge, where there are **only two exit points**. Flat Rock Drive in Flat Rock Gully, the proposed dig site, **is one of them**. The use of this road will be severely compromised by 70 heavy truck movements every hour, eleven hours a day on week days and for six hours on Saturdays, which are **sports days for schools and local clubs**.
- The proposed traffic lights at the low point in Flat Rock Gully will greatly impede and thwart the movement and flow of traffic from both north and south on Flat Rock Drive. The gradients on both sides of Flat Rock Gully are steep, posing potential problems.
- **The alternative exit point from Northbridge, i.e. Strathallen Av, will not be able to cope.**
- Strathallen Avenue serves local traffic from the peninsula suburb of Northbridge, to the adjacent suburbs of Cammeray and Crows Nest, or the City, Airport etc. Added in will be all the traffic from the north which cannot reasonably use Flat Rock Drive due to the 770 truck movements a day, 4,270 truck movements per week.
- Concurrent with the proposed excavation of Flat Rock Gully and the impeded traffic flow, is the proposed redevelopment of the Channel 9 site at the corner of Willoughby Rd and Artarmon Rd, Willoughby. Willoughby Rd presently is one of the through arterial roads.
- The Channel 9 site activity would greatly disrupt and markedly affect traffic which would normally use Willoughby Road as a route to and from the Freeway etc.
- Importantly, Flat Rock Drive is the preferred route for ambulance vehicles to access the eastern and north eastern area of the North Shore. The passage of the ambulance would be greatly jeopardised.
- The chaos and mayhem this project will generate in this concentrated area will be mirrored by irate drivers behaving irrationally, near misses, accidents and possibly even death on Flat Rock Drive. The scenario is one of a steep gradient on either side of the Gully, traffic lights at the base of the Gully, backed up traffic and impatient drivers not paying attention.

### **(C) Other Concerns.**

#### **(i) Property:**

- My home is situated immediately above a section of the tunnel emanating from the proposed primary dig site.
- I am concerned about vibrations derived from tunnelling being felt in my home, as well as excavation noise and vibrations from tunnelling being discernible in my home.
- I am concerned about possible damage, structural and/or cosmetic, to my home. This could be exacerbated by the adjacent Luna Park Geological Fault at Northbridge.
- Substratum acquisition: If this project does proceed, the Title Deeds of my property will bear a notation to the effect that The Beaches Link Tunnel passes beneath my property. This does not augur well for the future for my security.

(ii) Local Businesses.

- The stretch of Sailors Bay Road at the western end of Northbridge, between Pyalla St and the Flat Rock Drive/Alpha Rd intersection, contains a number of shops which are small businesses, all family owned.
- The traffic back up into Sailors Bay Rd. and chaos which would result from the 70 trucks/hour scenario already discussed on Flat Rock Drive, coupled with the existing mayhem at afternoon school pick-up at Shore School directly opposite the strip of shops, would completely scuttle these businesses.
- Prospective shoppers would find this just too hard, and go elsewhere where access and parking are easier.
- These businesses would not survive five (5) + years of customer deprivation.

(iii) Transport

It is apparent that no real thought has been brought to bear concerning alternative methods of transporting large numbers of people to and from the Northern Beaches.

The NSW Government should not be encouraging more cars onto the road. This is exactly what the Beaches Link Tunnel project will do. We are becoming a mini Los Angeles, totally reliant on the motor vehicle. It is only of academic interest that a given journey, five (5) or more years into the future, will be shorter by **only minutes**. For the tax payer, these will be very expensive minutes indeed.

The Beaches Link Tunnel, should it occur, must carry Public Transport. Such must not be penalized by the imposition of road tolls, for the patron ultimately bears this cost. Public transport should be affordable as well as efficient.

The B Line bus service, a public bus route to the Northern Beaches, which commenced on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2017, has proved very successful in reducing the number of commuters using motor vehicles. This concept should be expanded and incorporated in to the beaches Link Tunnel. Has anyone thought about a train line??

The Chief Engineer for the Sydney Harbour Tunnel project, postulated feasible alternatives to the Beaches Link for effectively and efficiently moving large numbers of people in a timely manner with minimal pollution.

One such scheme was to construct a tunnel from Manly, under Sydney Harbour, exiting at either or both Bondi Junction and Edgecliff on the southern side of Sydney Harbour.

A rail link/light rail could be built from the Northern Beaches to the existing rail hubs of Chatswood and Hornsby. From there, patrons can travel to any part of Sydney.

Why is Sydney unable to learn from the big cities of Europe and Asia where public transport operates frequently, efficiently and effectively **across country** without patrons having to travel to a central point in order to reach their destination?

Please abandon the idea of using Flat Rock Gully as the primary dig site.  
Save our health and sanity while keeping our bush and wildlife intact.

Thankyou.  
Yours sincerely,