

**Submission  
No 46**

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

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Parliamentary Inquiry into The Impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link Project.

Submission against the current proposal on grounds of extreme environmental harm.

The Beaches Link proposal has been identified as an excessive waste of public money, an archaic response to traffic woes, an affront to public transport advocates and totally tone deaf to climate change concerns. (It is also clear that consultation with effected communities and stakeholders was totally inadequate, being in the midst of the Covid pandemic).

However, it is the brutal and vandalistic treatment of a fragile environment that I would like to concentrate on. Already (post EIS exhibition) the Director of Infrastructure Assessments, Planning and Assessment is seeking further independent expert air quality, traffic, water and hydrology advice. But this will only focus on Flat Rock Drive and Middle Harbour Reserve.

Probably **the** most environmentally sensitive areas of all-Manly Warringah War Memorial Park and Burnt Bridge Creek- will be decimated by the current tunnel plan.

Just a reminder that Manly Dam's catchment was protected in the 1880's to conserve the quality of water and later the area was designated as Australia's only War Memorial to be created by conserving natural bushland!! It is now the last freshwater lake in Sydney where you can still swim in unpolluted water!!! The water ultimately flows to Manly's iconic surfing beaches. The park is so special that Northern Beaches Council is currently nominating it for National Heritage listing!!! Its Aboriginal heritage is precious as is its ecological richness.

Many of the EIS submissions highlight the extreme impacts to flora, fauna and water quality of Manly Dam's environs. Even the Northern Beaches Council submission sounds many alarm bells. (Council strangely supported the tunnel before receiving any of the details!)

In this submission I would like to emphasise and highlight the irreparable harm that will be done to Manly Warringah War Memorial Park (Manly Dam). This will be caused by significantly widening Wakehurst Parkway and building ingress and exit infrastructure on a thin, high escarpment between Garigal National Park and MWWM State Park. Throughout the EIS, care for the environment was repeatedly stated to be the major consideration. Yet in the most sensitive part of the whole plan, this seems to have been totally ignored!

The result is: -

- 1/. The rocky features along Wakehurst Parkway will be blown up and jack hammered
- 2/ Construction of the Beaches link project would involve the loss of 20.92 hectares of threatened species habitat, most of it along this stretch of road (That's 39 football fields). This includes the removal of nearly 1.5 hectares of Duffys Forest Endangered Ecological Community-*some of the rarest vegetation on the planet.*
- 3/ The entire project would involve the estimated loss of 3,500 plus trees well over 2,000 of these would be along this stretch of road-including many rare and ancient species. Earth moving and excavation would also degrade up to another 50 metres of bushland adjoining the road through "edge effect" ... negative impacts which include opening up the parks to weed invasions and pathogens.

4/ Clearing of forest will occur at the headwaters of steep gullies and fragile creeks that feed Manly Dam Reservoir. The EIS states that “There is the potential for impacts on aquatic biodiversity due to reduced water quality during operation due to the presence of sensitive receiving environments”

In other words, the pristine waters of \*Manly Creek (Curl Curl Creek), home to the only population of Climbing Galaxias Fish in Sydney, is very likely to be polluted as is Manly Dam itself. This population of unique climbing fish was estimated by the Australian Museum to have existed here for 90 million years plus and is an ancient Gondwanan relic. \*Manly Creek is identified as being a Type 1 Key fish habitat and first order waterway (NSW DPI, 2013)

5/ Manly Creek and Manly Dam currently tick every box in regards to being a healthy aquatic eco system, having visual amenity and being a primary contact recreation site- yet it is identified as being one of the waterways most at risk from the construction-including from earthwork stockpiles. Surely this is too valuable a community asset to be put in jeopardy from a polluting road system.

The ephemeral water courses along Wakehurst Parkway are also important breeding habitats for the threatened Red Crown Toadlet.

6/ The Sydney Water site at Kirkwood Avenue, Bantry Bay was saved by the community from a housing development in 2015 and promised to be returned intact to the adjoining War Memorial Park by Mike Baird (Premier of NSW). This very site is now earmarked to become a temporary construction support site with all rare biodiversity cleared.

The EIS stated that “Impact to sensitive areas have been minimised by optimising the location and layout of temporary construction support sites”. The polar opposite is happening here in an area which has the most biodiversity to lose!! Incredibly this bushland site with rare flora and fauna was chosen as a construction site over a flattened car park area at Seaforth Oval which could be easily restored!!!!

7/ A ventilation outlet along Wakehurst Parkway will produce emissions so great that it will even “Have the potential to effect prescribed airspace”. There would be increases in the PM2.5 concentration along Wakehurst Parkway and a large increase in traffic (about 140 per cent) as a result of the project. However, the section of Wakehurst Parkway that is affected crosses bushland, so all the toxic air quality would be released in to the very area that people go to for bush walks, biking and leisure activity- An area that comprises Sydney’s so called “Green Lungs”!! The unfiltered stack will be on a ridgetop above a natural basin which the bad air quality (complete with a range of toxins) will settle into!!

The EIS for both the Western Harbour and Beaches Link tunnels put future pollution levels at more than double the maximum PM2.5 limits across the route-any amount of PM2.5 does harm according to the W.H.O

There are a number of alternatives to this destructive plan which include underground light rail, extending the tunnel so that it doesn’t impact this fragile area or a designated public transport corridor between Chatswood and Dee Why. This would mean protecting the War Memorial Park and other precious environmental jewel’s including:- Flat Rock Gully, Middle Harbour and Burnt Bridge Creek.

if the tunnel was built for public transport only (as is the case in Brisbane) then all the harmful ancillary road infrastructure would not be required.

Surely our environment is getting hammered enough already without this clumsy and damaging proposal.

The local community has been working for years to conserve this specific area through citizen science, bush regeneration and advocacy. Currently a federal government grant is enabling a comprehensive biodiversity survey to be carried out for the first time and an amazing natural wealth is being revealed. The Beaches Link plan (as it stands) is just a sign of retrogressive and backward government policy instead of innovative thinking.

This short video encapsulates the harm that will occur to the Manly Dam catchment: - <https://animoto.com/play/1I5rvxNZ3wd3NFPVfn7DqA>

The below photo shows how sediment and silt flowed into local creeks when bushland adjoining Manly Dam was cleared for the Manly Vale Public School extension (2017). This would be replicated several fold with the current Beaches Link proposal and decimate fragile waterways.

