

**Submission
No 138**

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

Name: Ms Edwina Laginestra

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I wish to make it clear I OPPOSE the building of the Northern Beaches Tunnel in its current proposal due to the irreparable damage it will cause the environment. The business case both economically and ecologically does not currently stack up and there is limited future value as public transport options have not been adequately assessed.

I am an environmental scientist, toxicologist and wildlife carer. I have done research on restoration of degraded land at Sydney Olympic Park and multiple projects determining long term damage to the environment from cumulative impacts on surface water, groundwater and tree removal.

Unbelievably this project will seriously damage surface and groundwater, remove over 2500 mature trees that provide food and habitat for remaining urban wildlife and will adversely impact on the Grey-headed flying fox (GHFF) colony at Balgowlah. GHFF are classed as vulnerable and we should be doing everything we can to protect successful colonies, instead a very limited EIS makes it clear the colony is at risk.

This colony was originally a maternal colony but by 2010 was a permanent camp as it could provide clean water, shade and nearby food sources. As an established colony, it was one of only a few colonies State-wide that did not suffer major mortality during the drought and heat-wave event of summer 2019.

This project has very sketchy details (and limited understanding) of impacts on groundwater, but they are quite clear that the entrance to the tunnel at Balgowlah will require serious impact on both ground and surface water of Burnt Creek. While most planners and scientists realise restoring natural creek lines as they are vastly superior to clean and manage our waterways, this plan goes backward to the bad planning of the 1960s. Destroying groundwater and concrete channels creates erosion issues and sends polluted streams at sudden high volumes straight to the ocean. The proposed tunnel entrance removes a dam, destroys a semi-natural creekline and blocks groundwater flow. This kills the creek but also the vegetation above it. Although the plan states it will remove 2500 trees, a lot more trees will actually die due to removal or re-alignment of groundwater flow.

Not only that, the noise during construction will be louder than noise used to disturb camps around the country. The removal of mature flowering gums removes their food source as well as causes other damage to soil, environmental communities and urban heat management.

There is limited discussion of impacts of climate change – which I believe is against the legislation, and offsets are not available – current camps in the area are not as suitable and many did not do well during the drought. The ineffectiveness of offsets can be read in many research papers and articles and if needed I will be happy to provide them.

As the colony is over 10 years old, the Threatened Species Legislation should be mentioned and a clear plan of management produced to protect this colony and the species.

With the lack of a clear plan of management, no real discussion of other entrance sites, and limited discussion of public transport (and limited reference to more people able to work from home), this project cannot be approved in its current format.

There are many more environmental issues regarding damage to Manly Dam, National Parks, buffer vegetation, loss of threatened communities, damage to harbour waterways, but I know other groups will be submitting further information on that. But it shows that ecological damage far outweighs any suggested benefits of the tunnel in the proposed outline.

I would be happy to speak at any public forum and answer questions

Yours faithfully

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