

**Submission  
No 154**

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

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**Date Received:** 14 June 2021

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## NSW Parliamentary Inquiry – Impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link

I oppose the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link project.

My husband and I, my children and my grandchildren all live, work and attend school and kindie in what will be the shadow of both the Wakehurst Parkway and Balgowlah stacks. We are in the unfortunate position of living equidistant to the two stacks – in the area which will receive the maximum particulate fallout at ground level from both stacks.

We are in the home my parents bought more than 60 years ago. We love the community in which we live – the people, the natural bushland and the wildlife are all inextricably linked.

All of this will be destroyed by the tunnel. I have to object.

Prior to reading other Environmental Impact Statement submissions made by many brilliant minds, and many State Government departments/instrumentalities, I thought some compromise solution could be negotiated.

Roads are congested, being reliant on the Spit Bridge to get into the city is less than ideal, so a tunnel is logical. Until you actually look at the logistics of building one, and the consequences for the environment and human health.

The NSW Government has not released any business case which shows the Beaches link tunnel is a viable option. There has been nothing to suggest any public transport option has been considered to ease congestion.

The ridiculously-sized EIS supporting the project was released, based on out-dated statistics and assumptions (and that doesn't even begin to cover all the misleading 'facts', or outright errors).

I will only briefly outline some issues based on the enquiry's Terms of Reference, as there are better minds than mine also making submissions.

The NSW Government has not publicly released any business case for the Beaches Link section of this project. Given the history of this Government's major projects, no matter how much it is predicted to cost, there will be a massive budget blow-out.

The very lack of a publicly available business case throws immediate doubt on the viability of the project. How can we possibly know whether we are getting value for money?

A tunnel might help some motorists shave ten minutes off their travelling time, but does that make it better for the community? Surely an efficient public transport system would be of greater benefit to a larger proportion of the community? And does it justify destroying bushland habitat and waterways for ever – to save ten minutes off a drive to the city?

Even assuming the Government has done some cost/benefit analysis on this section of the project, the figures will all be pre-Covid (as is the case of the EIS statistics).

There are definitely fewer people living on the Beaches working full-time in the city. I do not know anyone who is not still working at least part-time from home (and it seems this will be the permanent 'norm').

Unfortunately, traffic across the Spit Bridge may not reflect this situation as traffic counting assumes all trips crossing the bridge are commuters to the city. Recent bus changes in the Seaforth, North Balgowlah, Balgowlah and Balgowlah Heights areas have forced those who work in the major hub of North Sydney/Milsons Point into cars as there is now no direct bus service to those areas. Similarly, parents are driving children attending the multitude of public and private schools from Mosman to North Sydney as it is impossible for them to get onto the one, packed City bus service from these locations.

The more cynical amongst us believe the bus "improvements" have been done specifically to force residents back into cars (hence justifying the need for the tunnel).

Nowhere has this Government touted an integrated public transport option to relieve congestion from these suburbs, and those further south. Or shown how decent public transport could improve travelling times. The Government discusses how brilliantly the B-line system works – and it does, for those who live north of Manly Vale. Those residents living in the areas which will be most affected by the tunnel issues do not have access to the B-line service.

In a Sydney Morning Herald article on May 21, 2021, The NSW Government's own Planning Minister Rob Stokes warned Sydney risked being enslaved to cars. In the article, Mr Stokes said Sydney needed to transition away from private cars, rather than focus on how they are powered. "While electric vehicles are certainly more efficient than existing vehicles, using vehicles less is even better," he said."

Discussing the emissions of electric cars versus petrol or diesel cars:

"Mr Stokes said electric vehicles were heavy and "torque-y" and created a lot of wear and tear on roads. He also said the weight contributed to the amount of particulate matter they expelled.

"Because EVs are so heavy, those particulates from brakes and tyres can actually be more significant than from existing petrol- and diesel-powered vehicles," he said."

And yet, while Mr Stokes is aware of the particulate issues with electric vehicles, it appears Transport Minister Andrew Constance is not. From another SMH article on June 10, 2021:

"Transport Minister Andrew Constance says he's determined to see the electrification of all cars, buses and trucks in NSW in order to improve air quality amid public health concerns over the government's expanding motorway network.

Mr Constance said he wanted to make health concerns over air quality from massive motorway projects like WestConnex a thing of the past by electrifying the entire Transport for NSW fleet and eventually all vehicles.

The article continues on:

"After the fires, the quality of the air we breathe is a major health concern, particularly in the basin like Sydney, where ultimately we have to do everything to do to protect community health," Mr Constance said."

People are not stupid.

We know political spin when we see it. It is clear the NSW Government is aware of how much damage the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link tunnel will do to the environment and human health. We know the worst elements of the projects were buried in the 14-volume, 20 odd kilo EIS.

Hopefully, this Enquiry will have access to at least the NSW Government department submissions on the EIS, and those of affected local Councils.

Of special note:

Both the NSW Environmental Protection Agency and the Northern Sydney Public Health Unit express concern about EIS modelling discrepancies relating to air quality receptors and ventilation outlet data.

The EPA was particularly concerned about:

The EPA recommends the proponent provide robust justification to demonstrate that the ventilation outlet emissions at the proposed emission limits will not cause adverse air quality impacts.

Analysis should include, at a minimum:

1. a focus on:

- PM exceedances at existing receptors (at 30 metres) near the Cammeray stack, and
  - predicted exceedances of PM and formaldehyde at non-existing receptors;
2. frequency (contemporaneous assessment), likelihood and severity of exceedances;
3. operational management and mitigation measures, including but not limited to augmentation of the ventilation outlets; and
4. review of the appropriateness of proposed emission limits for the ventilation outlets.

It was also scathing about the lack of data relating to air quality around the Beaches only public/private hospital at Frenchs Forest.

The NSW Environmental Protection Agency's submission highlights EIS omissions including the need for more concise information about the number of barge movements and justification for the exceedance of blasting limits.

Of special relevance to those residents of the affected Seaforth/Balgowlah/ North Balgowlah/Balgowlah Heights areas, blasting is expected to close the Wakehurst Parkway on a number of occasions (off peak transport-wise) for an unknown period of time. This road is the only access our suburbs have to their only public/private hospital.

Diverting to Royal North Shore adds at least another 40 minutes to any ambulance ride from the Seaforth/Balgowlah/Balgowlah Heights/North Balgowlah areas. This time could literally be the difference between life and death.

I am old. The reality is that the health consequences of the tunnel may not affect what is left of my life. But I have children and grandchildren, whom I love dearly. If the tunnel goes ahead, I would want them to move as far from here as possible. It may make it a lonely old age for me and my husband, but who would expose their family to the acknowledged health consequences associated with such pollution?

Ann Bolton