

**Submission
No 158**

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

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As a young professional who grew up in north Seaforth and now lives in Cammeray, I am directly impacted by the construction of the Beaches Link tunnel. This is not, however, my primary reason for objecting. I understand Sydney needs infrastructure. However, more privately owned toll roads are not, and never have been, effective solutions to congestion. The more roads we build, and the less effective our public transport, the more we force people into cars and back into traffic jams; every city in the world has demonstrated this. And, the more giant private roads and tunnels we build the more we undermine liveability and community cohesion and the more we damage the wonderful natural environment that we should be so proud of in Sydney.

For my generation, Sydney's existing toll roads are already too expensive to use. We have studied hard to get a good education and we work long hours in jobs that are competitive to get. We earn reasonable salaries but are penalised by high housing costs and are effectively locked out of Sydney's housing market. Just to go from Cammeray to Rooty Hill where I volunteer one day a week costs me \$48.84 return, every single week, in addition to other toll charges of moving around Sydney. To add another toll on to get to my parents' place on the northern beaches will be just one more charge I can't afford. I would not use the Beaches Link tunnel.

I do not believe the Beaches Link tunnel is a viable transport solution. The traffic modelling dates back to 2016, it fails to distinguish between local and commuter traffic and it fails to take into account behaviour change and hybrid working models that are now being formalised in many workplaces. I also believe that it contains many outdated assumptions about 'future proofing' Sydney. To understand future proofing means understanding the next generation. As a service design researcher and consultant, I believe it is clear that younger Sydney residents are driving less – many people my age do not own cars but use ride shares, they are seeking to live close to where they work, they are seeking walkable communities with green space and local integration. The Beaches Link tunnel is the antithesis of this – in particular the 12-lane super highway that will forever divide and scar Balgowlah and Seaforth.

I also want to emphasise how much responsibility the current generation of decision makers should have for 'future proofing' our environment. This is an emissions-intensive, private-vehicle based, privately owned (after sale) project that in no way addresses goals like 'zero emissions by 2050'. When I say 'emissions intensive' I do not only refer to Australia's miniscule uptake of electric cars and the likelihood that much of the traffic will be generating carbon emissions – I am also referring to the projects massive carbon footprint in terms of embedded emissions in materials and construction emissions.

The Beaches Link is highly, highly destructive of our precious natural environment at Flat Rock Gully and at Manly Dam and Burnt Bridge Creek. How is it possibly justified to damage or destroy these precious areas that should be protected for future generations? I once walked daily along Burnt Bridge Creek which will now, effectively disappear as massive falls in ground water dry up its flow. I now live near Flat Rock Gully, a wonderful oasis and escape from the city. The local community worked for decades as volunteers to regenerate the bush at Flat Rock Gully as did local residents around Burnt Bridge Creek – this was their gift to my generation and their work should not be undone by an outdated transport model. For what? A reduction of 10% in traffic on Military Road when we are not even sure what trips we will need to make into the future, now we are all used to working via Zoom and Teams. The many environmental costs outlined in the EIS for the Beaches Link are far too high a price to pay for any project, least of all a privately-owned toll road – and I worried that we will regret this project for many decades to come.

I strongly object to this project at every level and hope you will consider the views of a young Sydney resident who will inherit the consequences.