

**Submission
No 159**

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

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Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Western Harbour Tunnel

I wish to lodge my overall objection to the entire Western Harbour Tunnel (WHT) project. In the fullness of time it will become apparent that this is a misjudged investment in unneeded infrastructure. It would be much better for the people and environment of Sydney if the project were replaced with an equivalent investment in public transport.

Should the project proceed, I wish to make particular objections regarding Yurulbin Point.

I would much prefer to see tunnelling completely under the harbour with no dredging of contaminated sediment.

Should the project proceed as currently envisaged, I make the following objections and comments.

Yurulbin Point (WHT 4 & WHT 5)

I wish to express significant concerns regarding the 2018 Reference Design and 2020 EIS about the significant impacts on marine life from dredging the harbour floor and laying the immersed tube which will form the actual tunnel across the harbour.

I find it unconscionable that the EIS did not provide details of the potential environmental risks in a publicly accessible, plain English format.

Added to this is the risk that this activity and construction of the cofferdam will lead to contaminated sediments polluting harbour waters and imposing odour and other health impacts on residents near this worksite and at White Bay.

I have major concerns about pollution from contaminated sediment affecting swimmers at Dawn Fraser Baths and Greenwich Baths, with potential negative health impacts.

My other concerns relate to:

- significant noise, vibration, health and other impacts on nearby residents for several years, particularly those at the end of Louisa Road and in Numa Street, Birchgrove
- the potential for damage to houses and other buildings wherever tunnels are at shallow depth, as would be the case near Yurulbin Point
- inherent construction risks involved in constructing and decommissioning the cofferdam and joining the driven tunnel to the immersed tube
- impacts on trees and other valued features of Yurulbin Park and denial of public access to this park during the construction period
- potential negative impacts from the relocation of the Birchgrove Ferry Wharf for the duration of construction.

I oppose removal of any publicly-accessible open space for motorway construction. Although the park will ultimately be restored and upgraded, loss of public access of over several years will nonetheless have a negative impact on the local community and park users. I am a frequent user of this very special park and bring my grandchildren here. They will be denied access to one of Sydney's premier waterfront parks for a significant proportion of their childhood and the same is true for all young people who use this part as an important part of their recreation. This park is an environment in sympathy with its natural origins using Australian native plants, which creates an escape from the stresses of urban life.

Although I understand the construction site would be within an acoustic shed, the shed will not (and cannot) fully shield residents from all noise, dust, vibration and possible odour impacts. This particularly as the sheds are within close proximity to residential properties. These impacts would arise from a range of activities within and around the park area, including noise from machinery and barge movements. I am relieved that all spoil movements from the Yurulbin Point sites will be by barge, noting that it would be difficult (if not impossible) for larger trucks to access this site through local narrow streets and the traffic impacts in residents would be intolerable.

However I have no confidence that the highly toxic sediment will be 100% effectively managed. With all the assurances in the world, one accident will see the contamination of a significant area of the harbour.

I am relieved to learn that worker access to these sites would be by boat from White Bay, but doubt the contractor will in practice be able to prevent all workers attempting to gain access to these sites by car. Even a moderate level of light vehicle congestion and increased parking demand along Louisa Road (currently restricted to 2 hours except for those with residents' permits and around Birchgrove Oval (where there is currently unrestricted parking) would have a major impact, as all streets in the area are narrow and already subject to strong parking demand. Strict measures are therefore needed to prevent any worker parking in this area, and these measures should be implemented prior to the start of construction and continuously policed.

The Yurulbin Point park incorporates a sequence of spaces using natural stone elements and outcrops. The hand-hewn sandstone path, the slipway, concrete walls and heavy timber elements incorporated into the design of the park remain as a reminder of its former commercial use. The design received a merit award in 1982 from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. In 1994 the name of the point (and park) was changed to from Longnose Point to Yurulbin Point to reflect the Aboriginal heritage of the area. Council is working with the NSW Government toward an agreement-in-principal to engage Bruce McKenzie to complete a new restoration plan for Yurulbin Reserve. This would be part of a commitment by the NSW Government to a \$10M park upgrade.

I note from the arboricultural impact assessment in the WHT EIS that 55 trees are to be directly affected in Yurulbin Park. I believe these trees are significant in the local context. Accordingly there is a need for State agency and project staff to consult with the Inner West Council's Urban

Forest and Ecology team to identify trees with the highest retention value. Trees should be replaced with mature plants in a 2:1 ratio. Offsets should include the introduction of ecological restoration features such as the development of a saltmarsh area adjacent to the park.

Options to relocate the existing ferry wharf should be based on a strategic review of transport services to/from this area that includes ferry patronage data. Consideration should be given a more suitable and/or supplementary ferry wharf site at the Miklouho-Maclay Park at the end of Grove Street in Birchgrove. This location may be appropriate as DDA compliant access could be readily achieved and it is serviced by the 441 bus.

Four aboriginal cultural sites at Yurulbin Point have been identified and described the WHT EIS, with protection measures outlined. These sites are:

- Long Nose Point 1 45-6-1901 LEP item A7 Shelter with midden and art
- Yurulbin Cave 45-6-2287 LEP item A6 Shelter with midden and art
- Shed Cave 45-6-2672 LEP item A4 Shelter with midden and art
- Five Hands Shelter 45-6-2967 LEP item A8 Shelter with midden and art.

A Council report identifies the following three sites, but not Five Hands Shelter, i.e. Long Nose Point, Yurulbin Cave and Shed Cave. The Council report also identifies a further site recorded as Birchgrove 45-6-1809, which was not mentioned in the EIS. The EIS does not include condition assessment data or cultural significance data for any of these sites. I ask that relevant information from the abovementioned Council report be disseminated to the public ahead of construction commencing.

Yours sincerely

Lewis Kaplan