

**Submission
No 188**

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTERN HARBOUR TUNNEL AND BEACHES LINK

Organisation: Balgowlah Residents Group

Date Received: 15 June 2021

Parliamentary Inquiry into the Impacts of the Western Harbour and Beaches Link Tunnel Projects

Submission by The Balgowlah Residents Group: The Primary Motivation for the Announcing the Beaches Link Tunnel in 2017 was because of the need to influence voters in Mosman and Manly in the two by-elections in April 2017 for the seats of North Shore and Manly

This submission addresses three of the items in the Terms of Reference for the Parliamentary Inquiry – these are:

- (a) the adequacy of the business case for the project, including the cost benefits ratio,
- (d) the consideration of the governance and structure of the project including the use of a ‘development partner’ model,
- (i) whether the project is subject to the appropriate levels of transparency and accountability that would be expected of a project delivered by a public sector body,

1. Preamble:

The Balgowlah Residents Group is a community group registered with the Northern Beaches Council.

Mission of the Resident Group: To work with residents to improve and protect the quality of life and amenity in our local community.

Charter of the Resident Group: To protect and improve the standard of living and amenities in our local area and the greater Manly area through collaborative engagement with residents and other Resident/Community Groups to ensure the views of members of our Resident Group are taken into account the decisions made the Northern Beaches Council and the State Government.

Scope of the Resident Group: The residents who are likely to be impacted by the construction and operation of the proposed Beaches Link Tunnel – these are residents in Balgowlah, North Balgowlah, Seaforth and Clontarf. Any

resident in Manly or the Northern Beaches is welcome to be a member of the Resident Group.

Priorities of the Resident Group:

- The proposed Beaches Link Tunnel
- The preservation of the Balgowlah Golf Club as a Green Open Space
- The preservation of the environmental quality of the Burnt Bridge Creek

2. Announcement of the Proposal for the Beaches Link Tunnel in 2017:

After announcing their intention to resign from the Legislative Assembly by Gillian Skinner (North Shore) and Mike Baird (Manly) in late 2016, the government announced that it was proposing to build the Beaches Link Tunnel to reduce traffic congestion in Military Road (in Mosman and Cremorne) and to reduce travel times to the Sydney CBD for drivers from Manly.

It was obvious to all that the announcement and its timing had everything to do with the by-elections. This was commented in the serious media – see the article below that appeared in the Australian Financial Review.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Gladys Berejiklian's promised tunnel to Manly still up in the air

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian has all but promised to build a \$3 billion tunnel to beachside Manly to help win a by-election this weekend but the response to a freedom of information request makes it sound like the project is an "evolving initiative" that is "still being considered".

17 April 2017

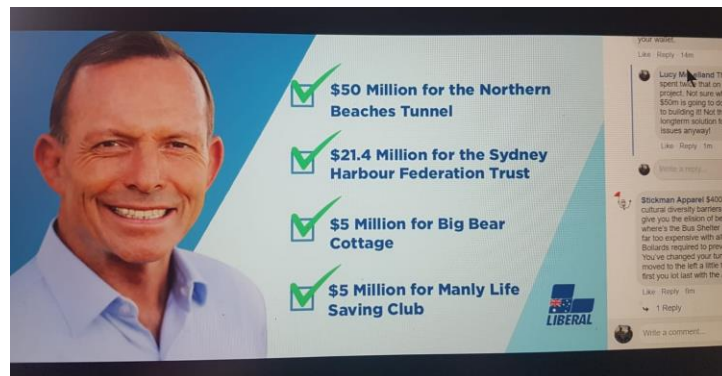
It was also obvious after the by-elections on 8 April 2017 that the announcement of the Beaches Link Tunnel was a significant factor because both the Liberal Party candidates were not popular and the

Liberal Party candidates had a fall in the number of primary votes cast:

- Felicity Wilson (North Shore) – 15.3% swing against the Liberal Party candidate.
- James Griffin (Manly) – 24.2% swing against the Liberal Party candidate.

3. 2019 Federal Election: Building the Beaches Link Tunnel was the #1 Campaign Message of Tony Abbott:

In the Federal Election in 2019, the Liberal Party candidate for the seat of Warringah (Tony Abbott) had the Beaches Link Tunnel his #1 issue in canvassing for votes.



In the article below, Tony Abbott berates Gladys Berejiklian to make a decision to “just build the tunnel”. This view would have had the endorsement of the Liberal Party.



NSW premier under fire for tunnel delays

Tony Abbott is piling the pressure on Gladys Berejiklian

Former Prime Minister and Warringah MP Tony Abbott is leading a growing chorus of local MPs to have the Beaches Link tunnel fast-tracked, with it being branded an “empty promise”.

In the recent NSW budget, \$560 million was pledged for tunnel pre-construction and planning over the next four years but, despite detailed design on the tunnel promised by mid-year, work still hasn’t started and MPs – especially Liberals – are getting twitchy.


If Labor gets in at next year’s election, it has made no secret of its plans to scrap the project and instead divert its focus towards public



Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott, pictured with Manly MP James Griffin, wants the Beaches Link tunnel fast-tracked.

4. Andrew Constance is seeking sign contracts for the construction of the Beaches Link Tunnel before the next State Election in March 2023:

The case for the Beaches Link Tunnel needs to be established on the fundamentals – not because it is part of the election strategy of the Liberal Party



In late 2019 Andrew Constance told the Mayors of Mosman, North Sydney and the Northern Beaches:

“I want and will have the contracts for the construction of the Beaches Link Tunnel signed before the next State Election in 2023”.

In December 2020, at the launch of the EIS for the Beaches Link Tunnel, Andrew Constance said *“Many said that this tunnel will never be built only a Liberal government can deliver the Beaches Link Tunnel”.*

5. Issues for the Parliamentary Inquiry to Pursue:

I believe that the Inquiry Chairperson should request the Secretary of TfNSW to provide answers to the following questions:

- Before the public announcement in early 2017 of the government's intention to build the Beaches Link Tunnel, was a preliminary business case for the project prepared by the RMS (or Infrastructure NSW) and submitted to the Risk & Audit Committee of the RMS ? If so, a copy of the preliminary business case should be made available to the Inquiry.

If no preliminary business case was prepared before the announcement in early 2017, what was the justification for proposing the Beaches Link Tunnel Project ?

- Before the Treasury agreed to providing funds for the preparation of the EIS in 2018 (assumed to be in the region of \$95 million), it is assumed that a business case was prepared by TfNSW for Treasury to justify the need for the funds. A copy of the preliminary business case should be made available to the Inquiry.

Terry le Roux, Secretary, Balgowlah Residents Group

I am available to appear before the Inquiry to represent the Balgowlah Residents Group