

**Submission
No 203**

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

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Date Received: 18 June 2021

Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link

**Joint submission by Lee Purches and Peter Purches as residents of North
Balgowlah.
18 June 2021**

Notes

- We understand that the Public Works Committee is inquiring and reporting into the impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link Project, including each of its constituent parts being the Warringah freeway upgrade, the Western Harbour Tunnel and the Beaches Link.
- This submission only addresses our concerns in regard to the Beaches Link section of the broader Inquiry into the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link.
- We have made no reportable political donations in the previous two years.

Terminology

We have used the following use of terminology:

The project – refers to the Beaches Link Tunnel Project

EIS - Environmental Impact Statement

TOR – Terms of Reference

CBR – Cost Benefit Ratio

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1. Introduction

We are long-term residents of the North Balgowlah and Seaforth areas having lived, been educated, and worked in the local area. Lee grew up in North Balgowlah from the age of 2 years old moving into in a house built by her father In Woodbine Street North Balgowlah in 1952. Peter moved from South Australia to Seaforth at the age of 10 years in 1960 and his parents spent the rest of their life in the local area, with his mother now residing in an aged care facility in Manly Vale at the age of 98 years. We both attended local schools for primary and high school and attended university in Sydney, commuting from the Northern Beaches.

Peter is a General Practitioner who works in the local area and Lee is a qualified Social Worker who commuted to the CBD for many years as well as having worked locally. After an absence of over 20 years working in rural areas in West Wyalong and Wagga Wagga we returned to Sydney in 1998 to live in North Balgowlah, where we still reside today.

As local residents, and from our professional perspectives, we object to the Beaches Link Tunnel Project. We are extremely concerned about the economic, environmental, health and wellbeing impacts of the Beaches Link Tunnel Project on the local community, the lack of consideration for alternative traffic solutions, and the long-term viability of the project as a traffic solution for the Northern Beaches for very little gain and considerable expense for the NSW Government.

We have outlined below our specific concerns against the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Inquiry. We would be willing to speak to the Parliamentary Inquiry regarding our submission if required.

2. Summary of objections to the Beaches Link project

We object to the construction of the Beaches Link Tunnel for the following key reasons:

- 1.** The impact for us personally as residents of North Balgowlah who are situated on a busy connector road, with the suburb located between two the tunnel entrance constructions sights, and between the two unfiltered stack sites.
- 2.** Impact on the local community during construction (including noise, vibration and light, pollution and dust, potential risk of damage to properties, increased traffic congestion, delays in commuting to local schools and work, and rat runs on streets not designed to cope with heavy traffic, loss of green space and walk and cycle ways, homes being requisitioned, and loss of income for some business all over a long period of time and emotional stress and impact on mental health).
- 3.** Long-term impact on the health and well-being of the local community once the project is completed.
- 4.** Long-term traffic implications of the project and the lack of planning to address road infrastructure around already heavily congested streets in the local area.
- 5.** Minimal long-term benefits to existing traffic congestion for a very expensive outlay and major inconvenience over a long period of time.

6. Destruction and ongoing risk to native bushland area and catchment area of the Manly Warringah War Memorial State Park and Manly Dam.
7. Impact on the fragile bio-diversity in areas such as the Burnt Bridge Creek and Manly Dam areas.
8. Impact on Middle Harbour and marine life.
9. Impact on significant Indigenous sites.
10. Projected cost / benefits and inadequate exploration of alternative transport solutions that are more environmentally friendly, recognise the changing structure of work since COVID-19, and use of outdated technology.

Our objections are based on our knowledge and experience as long-term residents in the local area and on our professional knowledge and experience. We have taken an interest in the proposed project in its early stages, attended local information sessions, read relevant information provided by NSW Transport NSW, researched the EIS information, and listening to local views and concerns.

Most residents on the Northern Beaches would like a solution to the increasing heavy traffic congestion that impacts on daily commutes to work and for leisure on weekends. However, we are concerned that generally the local community does not understand what will be the actual outcomes and cost / benefit of the project or the potential impacts of the project on the community for many years during construction and once completed. The project seems to have been presented to the community as the only viable traffic solution. However, in the long term we can only see benefits being for the residents of suburbs along the Military Road commuter corridor. Northern Beaches is likely to continue facing traffic congestion, with those living in suburbs within proximity to the project being significantly impacted for an extended period of time.

Our concerns about the project are detailed below under the Terms of Reference.

3. Terms of Reference

(a) **The adequacy of the business case for the project, including the cost benefits ratio, and**

(h) **Whether the NSW Government should publish the base-case financial model and benefit cost ratio for the for the project and its component parts**

We are unaware of the business case for Beaches Link as a stand-alone project. We believe it would be helpful to assess the Beaches Link as a separate project for the purpose of conducting a cost benefit analysis and presenting a separate business case.

We absolutely agree that the NSW Government should publish the base-case financial model and cost benefit ratio (CBR) for the project and its component parts including separate figures for the Beaches Link.

There has been some work done by local experts in our community to calculate a Beaches Link cost benefit analysis. We understand that the work done produced a CBR which was

found to be less than the minimum needed to justify such an infrastructure project. The impact of COVID-19 has been estimated to further reduce the CBR. This raises a number of issues: i) ensuring only up to date data is utilised for any cost benefit analysis and ii) calling into question the validity of going ahead with such a complex infrastructure project.

Transparency is of the utmost importance for any major infrastructure project. All assessments and analysis information should be made publicly available.

Medium-high density development has been forecast for the Northern Beaches as the justification for the Beaches Link Tunnel. It would be helpful to know what is driving this development, is it in the best interest of the Northern Beaches, and is it contingent on the Beaches Link infrastructure?

The EIS for the Beaches Link focussed on the positive socio-economic benefits however it glosses over the true cost / benefit analysis. Projected cost / benefits would suggest minimal long-term benefits to traffic congestion relative to the very expensive outlay of construction of the Beaches Link Tunnel, and the major inconvenience for a large community over a long period of time.

The Beaches Link Tunnel is likely to concentrate congestion even further at either end of the tunnel entrances. Long term it is estimated that the reduction of traffic along Military Road will be 10%. This is a small reduction for such a costly project that has major short-term and long-term consequences for the local areas affected by the project with major consequences for the environment.

It is concerning that even the EIS does not adequately compare the potential benefits of alternative sustainable, environmentally friendly approaches to transport solutions. Costly tunnelling is an outdated transport solution and will leave Sydney no better off in the long term. Transport solutions must contribute to reducing emissions from cars and support strategies to help address climate change as part of any cost benefit analysis.

(b) The adequacy of the consideration of alternative options

We are concerned that the NSW Government has not adequately explored all alternative options for the Beaches Link project in order to address congestion and travel time.

There are a range of alternative transport solutions for the Northern Beaches, which can reduce traffic congestion and travel time, while minimising the impacts on the environment and community, and contributing to zero net emissions. All options should be put to the residents of the Northern Beaches with both benefits and costs. Alternative transport solutions would be able to support many of the proposed socio-economic benefits mentioned in the EIS.

COVID-19 has shown us that we are capable of adapting and finding low cost solutions to traffic congestions in cities. We now have an opportunity for a new way forward that would be cost effective and contribute to reduction in emissions and other climate change strategies. The pandemic has shown us that the number of cars on the road can be reduced, leading to a decrease in congestion, emissions, and travel time for commuters. At the same

time, we need to embrace new technologies for traffic solutions that support reduction in emissions.

Options that could be explored further include:

- More efficient public transport options including: increasing buses and the number of park-and-ride parking stations, electric buses, rail, light rail, trams, and more clearways on significant corridors. B-Line buses have made a difference and this could be further expanded. Of interest is the fact that NSW Government has recent put up for sale land that had been ear-marked for a B-Line park-and-ride station at Spit Junction. Perhaps the Inquiry could enlighten us as to the reason for this decision.
- Improve existing local road infrastructure and cycle ways.
- A railway network that includes Chatswood to Dee Why and Brookvale and up and down the Northern Beaches that links with the local bus and ferries.
- A rail tunnel is an option worth considering which could be more cost effective, have less impact. and would have greater capacity to move larger numbers of people faster.
- Supporting suburban and regional development, support local businesses, decentralisation of NSW Government Departments and regionalisation of work to reduce the number of commuters to the CBD.
- Support for flexible work arrangements including working from home and flexible work hours to reduce concentration of commuters in peak hour. We know many people are willing to work from home and that some form of working from home is sustainable for many work places. This allows families more time together, and has many health benefits of workers spending less time travelling each day, having more time exercising, and spending time with their families and sharing caring roles.
- Emerging technology: Electric cars could reduce the need to filtered stacks however they do not reduce traffic congestion. The introduction of electric buses could make a big difference. This technology does not require the infrastructure of rail or tram lines and has the capacity to cover more areas and could be driverless in the future. This option would need to be supported with adequate parking stations and clearways.
- Ferries are not currently utilised as much as they could. For commuters to see ferries as a viable transport option there needs to be more affordable fast ferries and very regular connecting bus transport (preferably electric) to Manly, Mosman and Cremorne wharves.
- Finally, the elephant in the room is the Spit Bridge. Growing up we remember the old Spit Bridge being replaced. Surely the option of replacing the current Spit Bridge with a larger overpass and the associated road infrastructure work needs to be explored further before being eliminated as an option.

When considering all options there needs to be consideration of existing traffic congestion and challenges in the Balgowlah, Seaforth and Manly Vale areas. If the project goes ahead, planning also needs to include greater attention to reducing speed limits and tightening restrictions on the size and weight of vehicles travelling on local suburban roads.

(c) The cost of the project, including the reasons for overruns

We understand that the Beaches Link Tunnel involves complex engineering and could be more costly than other tunnels in NSW. A rail tunnel would be more cost effective, would have less negative impact, and would have the capacity of moving a greater number of people faster. The Beaches Link Tunnel is an expensive and complex project with likely hidden expenses. As such there is potential for overruns by contractors and budget blowout for the NSW Government, which will ultimately fall to taxpayers.

(d) The consideration of the governance and structure of the project including the use of a 'development partner' model

We are unsure of the benefits of the 'development partner' model for the Beaches Link Tunnel. However, it is worth considering whether the Beaches Link Tunnel is likely to generate the income other tunnels generate and, if not, it may require greater financial subsidy by the NSW Government. Contractors also have very little vested interests in the local environment and community and may not prioritise these factors as they juggle the realities of the project and financial outlays.

(e) The extent to which the project is meeting the original goals of the project

We understand that the goals of the project involve reducing congestion and making journeys faster. It is not clear how these goals will be measured.

It is possible that the goals may be achieved when commuters are travelling at non-peak times, however at peak times there is unlikely to be any real benefit. We anticipate that there will be a long, congested tunnel at peak times, with local traffic opting to stick with the Military Road option with the added advantage of avoiding tolls.

There has been minimal planning to address the increased congestion that will exist on roads leading into the tunnel entrances. For example:

- The design of the project will divert traffic from Warringah Road and Wakehurst Parkway into the tunnel, which would normally proceed over the Roseville Bridge, adding further to congestion into the tunnel.
- Forecast development on the Northern Beaches will see an increase in the number of cars.
- The tunnel will likely see an increase in traffic to the Northern Beaches on weekends putting increased pressure of local road infrastructure and parking.

(f) The consultation methods and effectiveness, both with affected communities and stakeholders

We are aware of the information provided by NSW Transport. However, we do not believe there has been adequate consultation and transparent information about the potential impacts and rather a 'washing over' of concerns.

People in the Northern Beaches community rightly want solutions to traffic congestion and reduced travel time. However, many in the community appear to be unaware of how they may be affected by the project and the potential impact on the community and environment. This would indicate that the consultation methods have not been truly transparent or effective.

(g) The extent to which changes in population growth, work and travel patterns due to the Covid-19 pandemic have impacted on the original cost benefit ratio

During the height of the pandemic the traffic congestion dropped dramatically and there was a marked reduced in pollution, which would significantly reduce the cost benefit ratio. This also indicates there are viable alternatives transport solutions.

(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, and

(k) The adequacy of processes for accessing and responding to noise, vibration and other impacts on residents, during construction and operationally

Transparency and Accountability

For the project to be truly transparent and accountable for the community to have confidence in the planning process the following information needs to be publicly released and available:

- planning details and assumptions;
- business case and cost benefit analysis for various transport options;
- all changes to plans and designs and the related EIS;
- forecasts in population growth in the area to justify the project;
- contractual arrangements;
- appropriate timeframes to deal with concerns regarding the complex project and the serious impact problems.

This has not been achieved to date.

Process for increasing community awareness and responding to concerns

There seems to be very little general community awareness of the potential impacts and consequences of the Beaches Link, during construction and operationally.

There needs to be widely advertised public meetings that fully outline the following:

- all the options,
- potential impacts,
- processes for dealing with complaints and concerns,
- processes for dealing with concerns about damage to property or the environment, and
- processes to followed if seeking compensation.

We have little confidence that there is an adequate process for raising concerns, during construction and operationally, such as concerns about exceeding noise levels, vibrations, dust, trucks doing rat runs through local streets, cracks appearing in house walls and swimming pools, operating times past agreed hours, and pollution from stacks once the tunnel is operational.

Below are two examples of potential impact issues.

Example 1: Potential Damage to Property

It appears that there is acknowledgement that there will inevitably be some cracking and other damage to properties. The Executive Summary of the EIS indicated that owners of properties damaged will be compensated. However, repairs to damage (if it is repairable) would be carried out, only if the property has been inspected prior to the project beginning. This, of course, would likely be once the project is completed, many years later, and this could impact on an owner's ability to sell their property in the meantime.

Questions that remain unanswered:

- How well informed are property owners of this situation? For instance, are the owners of the houses built on cliff edges around the Seaforth Bluff area where drilling will occur aware of the work taking place below their properties and the potential for vibrations and possible damage?
- How is this information being rolled out to ensure all residents in the suburbs affected are be able to make an informed decision about having a pre-project inspection conducted on their property?
- Who will carry out the pre-project inspections?
- What is the timeframe?
- Who will assess and determine repairs required or compensation?

Example 2: Dealing with various construction impacts

The EIS information brochure states that this project will "involve tunnelling 24 hours a day, seven days a week" and "the majority of tunnelling on the surface will take place inside acoustic sheds which is supposed to manage the potential impacts of noise, dust and light spill. These sheds will be closed at night to further reduce noise'. It is also planned that there

will be "light vehicle movements outside of standard construction hours". (Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection EIS Information Brochure; Transport NSW Dec 2020).

To our knowledge there has been no resident input into what are acceptable levels of noise or hours of operation during construction.

Further questions for consideration:

- What guarantee does the community have in regard to monitoring what are acceptable levels of noise, vibrations, dust, inconvenience during construction?
- Who will monitor this?
- Who will intervene?
- Who will represent the community's interest?
- What complaint mechanisms will be in place for property owners or renters?
- How will the public be able to address longer term consequences?

If the project proceeds, we would support the appointment of a fully independent advocate or arbitrator to work on behalf of residents and the community to negotiate with contractors.

(j) The impact on the environment, including marine ecosystems

A/ Impact on marine ecosystems including Middle Harbour and marine life.

- We are concerned about the environmental impact on Middle Harbour and the marine life resulting from the tunnel construction. Our understanding is that an "Immersed tube tunnel" is to be installed and the related dredging will disturb toxic organic and inorganic chemicals which could lead to the death of marine life in the area including white seahorses. We are also concerned about the long-term consequences on Middle Harbour of having the immersed tube tunnel.
- As mentioned in section 1.5 of the EIS, there is concern that disturbance of toxic sediments may have some lasting impacts on Middle Harbour including on the quality of the water and safety for swimming and fishing, especially at Clontarf.
- The EIS identified that a colony of Little Penguins live around the foreshores of Seaforth and Castlecrag and may be disturbed during construction of the tunnel. The EIS acknowledges that this may lead to the penguins relocating permanently, however this disturbance could have much more dire consequences given the already fragile nature of penguin colonies in the Sydney Basin area.

B/ Destruction of native bushland and water course areas for the Manly Dam and Manly Warringah War Memorial State and Burnt Bridge Creek area

- Manly Dam is one of the few unique inland water catchment areas that supports Australian flora and fauna as well as providing an important recreation area for both local residents and visitors from other states and overseas. During the pandemic the

Manly Dam area has provided an important space for people to exercise and relax during lockdowns and it is an important site for scientific water research and education field trips for students.

- We have major concerns regarding the destruction of native bushland along the Wakehurst Parkway ridge during drilling and construction. This area is part of the catchment for both the Manly Dam and Bantry Bay, and an important wildlife corridor and urban sanctuary for native flora and fauna and is a significant cultural heritage area.
- There will be ongoing the risk to both the wildlife and the unique flora of the Manly Dam area due to changes in their environment, especially from the polluted air associated with the unfiltered stacks and toxic sediments in the water catchment.
- This is a unique area of Sydney with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal historical and cultural significance, regardless of whether they are covered in vegetation or not. Once destroyed this heritage cannot be restored. This area should be prioritised for protection as we look for alternative transport solutions.
- Pollution of the construction run off over the catchment area for Manly Dam will impact on wildlife, the unique flora and human activities such as swimming and kayaking. This is a unique and fragile environment within a busy city and the biodiversity requires our protection.

C/ Destruction of native bushland and water course areas for the Burnt Bridge Creek area

- The Burnt Bridge Creek is an important water course for the Manly Lagoon. There is concern about pollution to the creek during construction and longer term from the polluted air quality from the unfiltered stacks.
- The natural flow of this creek will also need to be adjusted to accommodate the drilling of the tunnel which will impact on local flora and fauna. The EIS tended to down play the significance of this adjustment e.g. "localised adjustment of a small section of Burnt Bridge Creek for road widening and drainage work" (Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection EIS Information Brochure; Transport NSW Dec 2020)
- There are many species of native wildlife in and around the creek including frogs, insects, birds and a bat colony which is located close to the drilling site along the Burnt Bridge Creek deviation.

D/ Destruction of limited green space and trees

The local environment will be severely impacted through the loss of limited open green spaces and removal of over 2500 established trees without local biodiversity offsets.

E/ Impact of the water table for North Balgowlah and Seaforth

The EIS stated that the tunnel construction will cause the water table in North Balgowlah and Seaforth to fall and the natural groundwater flow into Burnt Bridge Creek will fall by 96%. This will impact on native vegetation including very large gum trees and native flora that grows on the plateau area of North Balgowlah. It will also impact on the gardens of residents in these areas. As a longer-term consequence there will also be a loss of birdlife and other fauna in the local area.

(l) The impact of the project on nearby public sites, including Yurulbin Point and Dawn Fraser Baths

The public sites of concern to us in regard to the impact of the Beaches Link Tunnel include:

- Temporary partial closure of Middle Harbour (from Northbridge and Seaforth adjacent to Spit West Reserve to enable the construction works for the immersed tube tunnel). We do not believe that the public has been fully informed about this part of the project and the temporary and long-term impacts over many years.
- As already mentioned the disturbance of toxic organic and non-organic sediments in Middle Harbour will impact on the quality of the harbour water affecting both a fragile marine life and quality of the water for safe fishing and swimming. This will impact on public use of locations such as Chinaman's Beach, Clontarf reserve, beach and harbour pool, Pearl Bay and The Spit area. There is particularly concern regarding use of the Clontarf harbour pool which supports the enjoyment of many families from all over Sydney during the summer months and the highly popular Clontarf dog leash free beach where dogs can play in the shallow waters. With rising temperatures over the next 10 years this is likely to have a major impact for the local community and visitors to the area.
- Loss of walking and cycling pathways along Burnt Bridge Creek during construction.
- Manly Warringah War Memorial State Park and the Manly Dam catchment area will be impacted by contaminated run off, destruction of bushland, noise and pollution.
- Loss of the green space of Balgowlah Golf Course and Balgowlah Oval.
- Impact on Indigenous sites along Wakehurst Parkway and Clive Park and lack of adequate protection for these sites.

(m) Any other related matter

A/ Other potential impacts during construction

- **Vibrations and pollution:** Concern regarding vibrations, excessive light emissions, reduced air quality, dust, and noise pollution associated with 24-hour drilling, removal of spoils and other movement of traffic during the construction. It is unacceptable for residents of the Southern section of the Northern Beaches to have to endure these impacts for many years and this will severely compromise their health and well-being.

The EIS provided little reassurance as to these concerns being addressed. Some examples are provided below:

The Executive Summary of the EIS states: "where airborne noise management levels are exceeded, there would be a requirement to implement reasonable and feasible noise mitigation" (page E-22, EIS). Who will determine what is "reasonable and feasible"? This situation is untenable and would likely see local residents who have concerns being at the mercy of the discretion of contractors who may or may not care about the impact on local residents.

The Executive Summary of the EIS also refers to "noise management levels" and the fact that "the use of rock-hammers for tunnelling activities has the potential to exceed noise management at various locations, however such activities would be scheduled outside evening and night time periods (where feasible and reasonable) to avoid or reduce ground-borne noise level exceedances on receivers". Who determines what is feasible and reasonable?

- **Traffic and transport impacts during construction:** The Executive Summary of the EIS states that there will be "increased heavy vehicle movements around worksites, and localised increases in traffic volumes and traffic delays" (page E-21). There is concern about the quoted estimated "2.5% increase in traffic at peak construction" as being "a small increase to current traffic volumes" (Transport NSW Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection EIS Dec 2020 NSW Govt. Information Brochure). This shows very little insight into the already congested, narrow roads in the local area, and existing heavy volume of traffic and delays, especially at peak times. There is a very high likelihood that both construction and operational vehicles will look for short cut routes to save time (time being important to contractors). In particular, the roads around Balgowlah are already very congested and the roads between Balgowlah and North Seaforth are narrow and not equipped to cater for an increase in traffic, especially heavy construction vehicles. Importantly, how will trucks be stopped from using local smaller streets as short cuts and how will this be monitored? There is also the issue of adequate parking for workers in and around the construction sites which will have a major impact on local residents.
- **Increased safety issues:** Concern that the safety of children and elderly residents will be highly compromised due to the increased volume of traffic on roads around the North Balgowlah shopping village; North Balgowlah Primary School and the Farmhouse Montessori Pre-school; Balgowlah Boys Campus of the Northern Beaches Secondary College; in the locality along Kitchener Road, Balgowlah Road and Roseberry Street and in Hill Street near Manly West Public School; and in the area around the Seaforth roundabout from Kempbridge Avenue and Sydney Road where there is an aged-care facility and leading down Frenches Forest Road to Seaforth Primary School.
- **Access to the Northern Beaches Hospital via Wakehurst Parkway** during construction from suburbs such as Balgowlah, Seaforth, North Balgowlah and North

Seaforth. Construction may also impact on Ambulance response times from the Balgowlah Ambulance Station.

C/ Long term impact for the local community if the project proceeds.

- **Poor Air Quality:** Having the polluted air in the tunnels being fanned toward the two entrances of the tunnels and into unfiltered stacks shows total disregard for the health and wellbeing of the local community. We cannot see how the current low levels of pollution in the Sydney area justifies it being okay to allow for unfiltered polluted air to be released across the area. Being located between both stacks will result in the suburbs of Balgowlah, North Balgowlah, North Seaforth, Manly Vale and Seaforth being greatly affected, regardless of which way the wind is blowing. In this area there are many primary schools, pre-schools and day care centres, two high school campuses, and several aged care facilities with vulnerable residents. As in most areas, there are residents with chronic illnesses who require the best possible air quality. We live in a first world country where we pride ourselves on our quality of life and meeting basic human rights. We are in a position to choose alternative transport solutions. However, if this costly project is so important to the NSW Government, then the cost of filters to ensure the health and wellbeing of local residents would seem to be justified.
- **Increased traffic congestion:** There appears to be no planning for local road infrastructure improvements. What is going to be done about the already congested traffic in the local areas around the project development?

Some examples include:

- Balgowlah: Balgowlah Road, Roseberry Street, Kenneth Road and Condamine Street.
 - Manly Vale is extremely congested at peak hour and it is anticipated this will be impacted both during construction and in the longer-term with traffic congestion building up both in and out of the tunnel.
 - Seaforth: It is also expected that there will be increased traffic around Ethel Street and other streets and the roundabout at Seaforth leading down Frenches Forest Road and Brook Street near Seaforth Public School. There is again already heavy traffic congestion in this area at peak hour in the mornings and afternoons.
- **Potential traffic rat runs:** Rat runs may develop both during construction and after completion of the tunnel as many drivers will try to avoid using the tunnel due to the cost of the tolls or will seek short cuts to tunnel entrances to avoid the peak hour queues. Of particular concern is the suburban road system along Woodbine Street at North Balgowlah and other local streets leading up to Wakehurst Parkway in the west and east to Kitchener Street and Balgowlah Road at Balgowlah. This is a busy road system, especially around the North Balgowlah Shops and North Balgowlah Public School and Montessori Farmhouse Pre-School. In the past this road system had a permanent speed limit of 40km/h but at some stage this was change to

50km/h. We would strongly suggest that additional speed bumps, roundabouts, traffic lights and pedestrian crossings will be required and the speed limit should be readjusted to 40 km/h. Interestingly, Manly now has a speed limit of 30km/h in high pedestrian areas. Other local traffic areas likely to be affected are mentioned under Increased Safety Issues.

- **Impact on Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Concerns about the stress on residents over an extensive period of time due to noise, dust, pollution, excessive lighting, increased traffic, traffic delays, and worry about potential damage to properties. Local residents will have a lot to endure over many years and face considerable uncertainty. This is likely to impact on the mental health of individuals and the community as a whole. What strategies will be in place to support the mental health and well-being of local residents?

4. Conclusion

This inquiry presents an opportunity for the full exploration of the best traffic solution(s) for the Northern Beaches. It is important that the decision about the most appropriate way forward is consultative and transparent and not rushed. It is not easy balancing the need for efficient transport and improved travel times against the impacts on the environment, community and individuals. At this stage it is not convincing that an appropriate balance has been achieved.

5. Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** The Beaches Link project should be assessed as a stand-alone project so that the real costs and benefits of this project and business case are clearly identified.
- **Recommendation 2:** alternative transport solutions be fully explored.
- **Recommendation 3:** Improved transparency and accountability with the provision of all relevant information in an accessible format and processes being made easily available to the community and individuals.
- **Recommendation 4:** A campaign be conducted to increase awareness in the community of the proposed project, and the potential impacts of the project including the potential impacts on the environment, community and for them individually and processes for raising and addressing concerns.
- **Recommendation 5:** Appointment of an independent arbitrator / negotiator / ombudsman who can act on behalf of the community.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Lee and Peter Purches
Residents of North Balgowlah