

Submission
No 209

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 18 June 2021

Partially
Confidential

I am _____ resident of Balgowlah and I wish to lodge my objection to the Beaches Link Tunnel based on the following points.
I am happy to speak at the inquiry.

First, I would like to express my concern about the fact that the online submission process was a daunting effort. The EIS has more than 12,00 pages and weighs 22 kgs! It takes weeks and a full-time commitment to go through all the details! Consultation feedback should be made simple not frustratingly hard to access.

- I have a teenage son at Bally Boys High and a 9-year-old child at Balgowlah Heights Public School and I am horrified to read about the catastrophic impacts of the construction and operation of the proposed Beaches Link Tunnel on the community, children, teachers and staff of local schools, the school grounds, and on Balgowlah Oval. I live nearby the Balgowlah Oval and it's hard to understand how this project could go ahead, we live in a democratic country where political leaders should nurture and protect the community and especially children. This tunnel will obviously cause some damage. My son will be exposed to toxic substances 12 hours a day from early morning at his school Balgowlah Boys High to evening when he trains with his football team (North Sydney) at Cammeray Oval three to four times a week.

The proposed construction and operational phases of the tunnel construction will irreversibly impact on the whole community in terms of noise, dust, vibration, access, disruption, traffic and road safety, air quality and health, and use of open space and sporting facilities. There are so many flaws in this project. Why would the NSW Government go ahead with this project when NSW Planning Minister Rob Stokes says he wants to implement a policy that aims “to temper demand for driving and car parking by aligning development with public and other transport options, continuous bike paths and end-of-trip facilities”? (SMH, Friday 26 February 2021).

Transport NSW and DPIE must establish a Working Group with the broader community, local schools and their respective P&C to provide a platform to discuss TOGETHER the backlash of such project in order to identify and appropriately minimise construction and operational issues for the Beaches Link Tunnel. These include (but are not limited to):

- Noisy construction works
- Dust emissions
- Unfiltered stacks
- Access arrangements
- Heavy trucks traffic (+500/day)
- Impacts on utilities
- Long-term operational issues
- Damaging impact on the wellbeing and mental health of residents, school children, their teachers and staff.

The Beaches Link Tunnel no longer reflects what the community wants in 2021

The Beaches Link Tunnel is proposed to solve a long-term problem that will not exist because of changes to the work/life balance following the broader adoption of work-from home and investment in WFH Hubs in the Northern Beaches. Less and less people will need or want to drive to the city (and beyond) during the morning peak. Many will drive to the office on the days they are required during non-peak times.

Having more residents in the Northern Beaches working from home, presents opportunities to increase local public transport options and active transport possibilities like walking and bike riding.

Despite the overall reduction of commuter traffic, induced demand and funnelling effects will result in more congestion and longer delays on local roads around the tunnel entrances, eliminating travel time savings in the tunnel.

EIS unrealistic and unfounded assumptions

The EIS claims that in 2037 the commute time from Balgowlah will be reduced by 30 minutes to drive to the city, the airport and beyond when it currently takes around 40 minutes to drive to Wynyard from Seaforth during morning peak hours!

The vehicle flow forecasts for 2037 were made without considering:

- The Dee Why to Chatswood Express Bus Service that commenced service in January 2020.
- The new norm work-from-home has been widely adopted with the introduction of restrictions to control the spread of Covid-19. Transport NSW assumes that WFH is temporary when there is an obvious move from workers and companies around the world to make it a permanent measure. Companies have realised that they actually make big savings by allowing their workers to work from home. In the construction sector, for instance, the share of work-from-home workers jumped from 15 per cent pre-COVID to 34 per cent in September 2020, according to Fair Work Australia.
In February 2021, it is estimated that 52% of workers on the Northern Beaches work from home. There is a push to increase this rate to 80% by the end of 2021 even after the vaccination campaign is completed.
A number of large employers (including TfNSW itself and many government departments) have officially adopted a hybrid form of WFH.
- As a result, it is anticipated that workers from the Northern Beaches will want to work from home as much as they can because of the construction itself – heavy traffic jams, increased congestion in Manly Vale and along Sydney Road due to the construction activities in the Burnt Bridge Creek Deviation and on the Balgowlah golf course site. This could last between 7 and 10 years.
- Claims that traffic along Military Road will be reduced once the tunnel has been completed sound pretty unrealistic. Due to the wrong traffic modelling calculations will experience a major/dramatic reduction in traffic is wrong, and hence does not align with the stated objective for the project. This project will actually increase car travel and further tolling in Sydney.
- The few public transport options mentioned in the EIS as an alternative to the Beaches Link tunnel are dealt with very briefly in the EIS documents. It is my understanding that the NSW Planning Minister Rob Stokes wants the government to prioritise cycling over cars, green space, sustainability and working from home etc. This policy is currently in draft form and open for public submission and covers state significant infrastructure like the Beach Link tunnel. The current pandemic has amply shown that we can successfully and productively decentralise where we work, unclog the roads and revitalise local communities.
So why spend so many billions for a tunnel if it's against planning minister Rob Stokes' vision of the future Sydney?

The Balgowlah/Seaforth tunnel entrance and roadworks will be an eye sore for residents: a 12-lane wide monstrosity, slicing the area in two, severing walking and bike parks. Six to 8 years of construction, vibration levels revealed in the EIS as “above the human comfort criteria for some residents” and the 24-hour movement of 500+ trucks filled with spoil.

Population growth predictions in the Northern Beaches are outdated.

The main objective of population growth via immigration must obviously be re-assessed, due to the fact that we are now living with the ongoing threat of a pandemic. As a result, the projected need for a tunnel is outdated and thus the business case weakened in current Covid times. There may be further lockdowns coming or even another pandemic. The EIS makes no mention of current work travel time changes due to covid and is thus out-of-date and irrelevant on many counts.

In the document Move - Northern Beaches Transport Strategy 2038 released by the Northern Beaches Council, it states the Council aims to reduce the usage of cars by 30% by 2038 so why do we need the tunnel? It will encourage an extra 50,000+ cars every weekend (refer to pages 12&13, <https://u6095790.ct.sendgrid.net/ls/click...>).

Unethical aspects of the Beaches Link Tunnel

- 1) This project is unethical as it uses taxpayer money to make a private toll road and as such is not for the benefit of the wider community. The tolls will be too expensive for most and this will encourage rat runs and more traffic on local roads. It is clear that the road/tunnel will never achieve its aim of reducing traffic.
- 2) The original document signed by former Premier Mike Baird stated that in finding a solution to traffic congestion along Military Road that public transport options would not be considered. This is obviously a biased investigative process that didn't encourage any real objective research into the best solution for the traffic congestion problems identified. The government must start a full investigation into public transport options, especially light rail from Dee Why Chatswood can be evaluated and compared to the Beaches Link Tunnel.

Environmental issues

The Beaches Link Tunnel will have a disastrous impact on the lifestyle of residents and during the construction phase and cause long term irreparable damage to our precious environment and green spaces. The government has recently declared a green space policy was to be implemented to protect precious open green spaces. This project is not in contradiction with this policy as this project will result in bulldozing Burnt Bridge Creek and Flat Rock Gully to make way for a dig site and a truck turning circle, plus destruction of various golf courses (Cammeray and Balgowlah).

Burnt Bridge Creek was supported for many years by an environment levy we all paid to the then Manly Council. Manly council called it the "The Life Spring of Manly". This was money well spent! Many residents are asking why it will dry up when the tunnel is built? The de-watering of the creek doesn't occur in isolation, the construction will take the ground water out of an entire

suburb forever. What will that mean to our street trees and gardens and local bush reserves? No water flowing downstream will also devastate Manly Lagoon. The EIS provides us with no answers, no reassurance and no solutions. Residents want their water catchment, creek and local ecosystem to be saved! (references are EIS App N pgs. 364,427).

The gazetted state park that protects Manly Dam's clean waters is home to endangered creatures like the eastern pygmy possum, large-eared pied bat, red-crowned toadlet and even the amazing climbing fish, the Galaxias brevinines, an evolutionary relic dating back to the Gondwana era some 60 million years ago.

Just under 2000 mature trees will be felled in this supposedly protected catchment. Within the project's entire construction footprint, the environmental impact statement says 23 threatened fauna species and one endangered population will be impacted.

Unfiltered emissions stacks

Why does this project ignore completely the health and safety of our school children and the residents? The NSW government wants 20 and 25-metre-high unfiltered emissions stacks. One will be installed near Balgowlah Boys High School and Seaforth Primary School and North Balgowlah PS. The other will overlook the freshwater Manly Dam, on which many endangered species rely.

These unfiltered emission stacks will spread fumes from the 15-km tunnel over the suburbs of Cammeray, Neutral Bay, Manly, Seaforth, Balgowlah, Manly Vale where there is a high concentration of preschool, primary and secondary schools. This is unacceptable since the increased car and diesel truck exhaust fumes contain several extremely toxic substances including tiny particles that are hazardous for human respiratory and circulatory health. It would be criminal to allow these toxic substances to float above our heads therefore it is unacceptable that the tunnel emission stacks be not filtered and located in such close proximity to schools.

Noise construction works will affect residents' mental health

EIS's graphs show that noise impact from Balgowlah roadworks is likely to affect over 4,000 homes (sound of loud TV or greater), about 1,000 at the Balgowlah construction site (Bally Boys High School will be directly impacted) and another 1,000 around Middle Harbour. About 1,000 homes are likely to experience sleep disturbance from the Balgowlah roadworks.

The big impacts from construction will be the noise... Many thousands of people will be affected among them many children trying to study or sleep. The noise will have a damaging impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Heavy traffic around schools will jeopardise school children

Manly Vale congestion on and around Condamine Street is already horrific and the EIS doesn't hide from the fact that it will get worse.

According to the Northern Beaches Council's submission, they refer to a recent review that has, among the many suggestions, these that are of particular concern:

- Join the 2 ends of Quirk Rd.
- Replace the roundabout at Balgowlah Road / Roseberry Street with traffic lights.
- Replace the roundabout at Kenneth Road/Roseberry Street with traffic lights.

It will lead to an increase of traffic around Manly West PS, which means that traffic-wise the school will be impacted somewhere near the scale of Bally Boys.

More information about this can be found in the draft submission at <https://files.northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/.../attachmentbo...> page 136 (of the PDF).

Conclusion

Pandemics have always had an impact on planning and architecture, and this one will be no different. Don't you think it's an ideal time to adapt to what we want the future look like and reflect that in the built environment?

The government is rushing through a decision to proceed with a design that has serious risks for the environment and the residents' wellbeing and mental health, marginal benefits in traffic reduction along Military Road, a big increase in congestion in Manly Vale and Balgowlah and will massively increase traffic coming to the Northern Beaches in summer months.

The NSW Planning Minister Rob Stokes often says that the government doesn't want to build our cities around motor vehicles, or around the buildings, and that we should prioritise the history and the people. To do so, we obviously need to adopt viable transport solutions and not a tunnel that will destroy lives and damage our precious environment and the communities. Why not build a light rail instead with almost zero toxic emissions? The Beaches Link Tunnel Project is an outdated transport solution. As cities around the world have embraced car use reduction and local living promotion, what are our politicians thinking in Sydney? Where is the vision?

This project is obviously not consistent with the Paris Agreement and as such, can be legally challenged in court. If the Federal Government is to take action to meet Paris Agreement climate targets and moves to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, it will be hard for the NSW government to succeed in assessing how the Beaches Link Tunnel could be consistent with the Paris target of keeping global temperature rise as close to 1.5C as possible. It would be a proof that our ministers can't keep claiming commitment to the Paris agreement, while simultaneously taking actions that blatantly contradict it.