Submission No 235

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTERN HARBOUR TUNNEL AND BEACHES LINK

Name: Mr Cian Byrne

Date Received: 17 June 2021

18th June 2021

Dear Committee,

SUPPORT OF THE WARRINGAH FREEWAY UPGRADE AND ASSOCIATED PROJECTS

I write in support of the projects being proposed for the Cammeray and North Sydney areas. This includes the Warringah Freeway Upgrade, Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link projects. I have provided a brief outline of reasons of support in this submission for your consideration.

WARRINGAH FREEWAY

Many years ago (2017), I wrote the then Minister for Roads Melinda Pavey outlining several concerns around the safety and inefficiencies of the Warringah Freeway. I have enclosed an extract of these concerns below.

I was extremely satisfied to see all these concerns and issues that I raised addressed in the EIS documents for the Western Harbour Tunnel project. It demonstrates that community feedback is valued has been taken on board for this project. Key concerns I raised were:

1. Poor signage – addressed in the EIS.
2. Poor lane usage – addressed in the EIS.
3. Visibility issues northbound approaching Miller St overpass – addressed in EIS and designs by adding a barrier to prevent traffic contamination.

You can read more about these in more detail at the end of this letter.

I have personally witnessed more than 15 vehicle accidents on this road which have been primarily caused by the design of the freeway. This project will address and reduce the potential for further accidents to happen in the future, which is essential to the safety of all users of the road network.

The upgrade also includes much needed upgrades to the cycle network of North Sydney. North Sydney Council has discussed similar cycleway upgrades back in 2006 but has never actioned them. This project will bring to life and enhance the excellent cycle network that extends from Epping to Willoughby.

I strongly support the improvement of the Warringah Freeway as proposed.

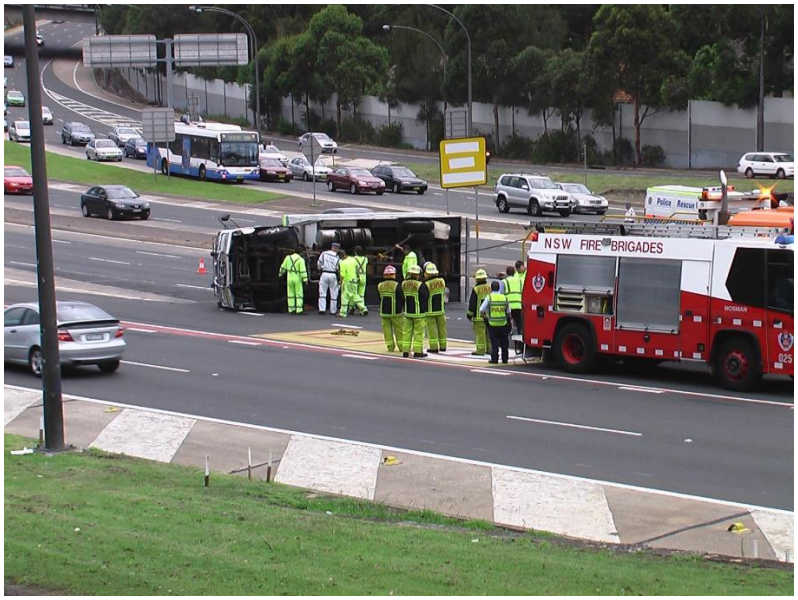

Figure 1: Accident Involving NSW Police Rescue Unit on Warringah Freeway, 2007

WESTERN HARBOUR TUNNEL

Although I do not feel as strongly about the Western Harbour Tunnel (WHT) project, I do believe it will be of long-term benefit for the Sydney basin and is in line with the 'three cities' vision. Having the ability to completely by-pass the Sydney CBD is of huge benefit.

Currently there are only two ways to head from North to West from the North Sydney side. These are The Sydney Harbour Bridge and Gladesville Bridge. Both routes are currently very congested during peak times. I have experienced this regularly.

The installation of the WHT will provide another potentially more efficient option to motorists and public transport users. Having the direct links into the M5, M4 and wider orbital network are a bonus and will make longer journeys much shorter than they currently are.

I can see the long-term benefits of this project clearly and believe it should go ahead.

BEACHES LINK TUNNEL

I cannot see a solid financial reason or justification for this project as it stands. The current proposed construction costs do not stack up with the revenue or benefits that are created by this project. Based on my calculations, this project alone will have to be paid off by the government and taxpayers for the next 60 years.

I would be extremely interested in seeing alternative proposals or variations for this project that incorporated dedicated rail or segregated public transport options that could support a financial case.

With that said, I can see a lot of 'public good' with the Beaches Link Tunnel. Improvements to the amenities of Mosman, Neural Bay and Cammeray can be seen with the reduction of traffic through these suburbs. Proposals to add further cycling connections through Mosman and Neutral Bay are a positive.

There is a strong need to remove traffic off the local streets in Mosman, particularly Military Rd. The traffic along this stretch of road has made it difficult for local businesses to operate due to reduced parking (clearways) and added noise from trucks that use Military Rd to access the Northern Beaches.

I see the ageing Spit Bridge as a serious risk to the road network efficiency. If the Spit Bridge breaks down permanently, there would be serious stress placed on the surrounding road network.

Putting aside the construction costs, the 'public good' from this project could be justification for this project going ahead as it stands.

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS & CONCERNS FOR NORTH SYDNEY

I accept that there will be some short-term pain experienced by residents, businesses and people travelling through the construction zones while the project is being built. Very few (if any) of these are positive impacts.

However, I believe that strong communication and working with local governments, communities and businesses will minimise the construction impacts for the time it takes to build these infrastructure projects. It is essential that we keep building infrastructure that supports movement and travel; and that construction impacts are not a justification for halting or preventing moving forwards.

Most of the 'serious' impacts on residences of North Sydney have already occurred. This includes the compulsory acquisition of properties for the purpose of building these projects. It would be highly unfortunate if residents who left their homes and have been already been disadvantaged through that process for no reason. I am one of those residents who had to leave their home of 23 years. The acquisition process should be reviewed, however, that is a separate issue.

The ventilation facilities that are being installed in Cammeray and other areas are an unfortunate biproduct of the tunnelling projects. I believe based on the scientific evidence and my own air-monitoring that this should also have minimal impact on the surrounding environment. The Anzac Park Public school is already bordered by three highly congested main roads. Increasing the efficiency of the Warringah Freeway by pushing traffic through the new Western Harbour Tunnel and removing the Cammeray bottleneck should ultimately result in far less pollution than currently in the air, even after being dispersed from a ventilation stack.

Most of the vehicle pollution will be non-existent in 5 to 10 years anyway, as the NSW Government, Federal Government and other world-wide regulatory bodies move to remove petrol and diesel vehicles from the road. Vehicle technology is moving towards electric and hydrogen powered alternatives. These provide far less pollution that current vehicles use. I believe operational pollution is a non-issue for all these tunnel projects.

CLOSING REMARKS

I support the Warringah Freeway Upgrade and Western Harbour Tunnel projects and feel that the concerns of the community are being heard and the project team(s) are adapting based on the feedback received. I look forward to seeing these projects commence soon.

I believe that the Beaches Link Tunnel needs further investigation and planning.

Yours Sincerely,

Cian Byrne

Notice:

These are my own views and do not purport to represent or reflect those of any organisation I am currently or previously employed.

Appendix - Bradfield Highway and Warringah Freeway Signage Improvements

The Warringah Freeway is one of the most complicated roads in Australia. It has exits and entries on the left, right and centre of the road way, with road dividers between some lanes, preventing exiting from some lanes. These exits south-bound are not labelled very well until it is too late to exit.

Figure 2: Map of Signage Sites - Southbound

Previously there used to be signage for these exits located on the southern side of the Sydney Harbour Bridge (SITE 2 & SITE 3 in figure 1). They have since been removed leaving the first signage for exits on the northern side at Milson's Point Station (SITE 1 in figure 1). This has created several different issues for users of this road.

1. Insufficient time for traffic that is in the incorrect lane to change safely into the correct lane.
2. Confusion around which lane to use for specific exits.
3. Inefficient use of the road system, caused by vehicles making *avoidable* lane changes linked to issue (1) and (2).

These issues could all be avoided by earlier signage on the southern side of the Sydney Harbour Bridge at SITE 3 in figure 1. The increased 'lane change notice distance' will increase from 130 metres to 1,500 metres before the first division/split in the freeway, 250 metres south of High St, North Sydney. This corrects only issue (1) outlined above.

The signage placed at SITE 3 (Southern side of the Sydney Harbour Bridge) needs to detail all the exits that can be taken by vehicles in a particular lane of the expressway. This way, traffic should only need to change lanes once on its whole journey on the expressway, increasing efficiency and reducing the potential for dangerous driving manoeuvres attempting to take an exit that was not clearly labelled.

The suggested signage to be placed at SITE 3 is below:

Lane 1	Lane 2	Lane 3	Lane 4	Lane 5 (peak)
Lavender St (Kirribilli)	Miller St (Northbridge, Frenches Forest)	Brook St (St Leonards, Naremburn)	Mount St (Neutral Bay, Kirribilli)	Mount St (Neutral Bay, Kirribilli)
Pacific Highway (North Sydney)	Falcon St (Crows Nest)	Military Rd (Mosman, Manly)	Ernest St (Crows Nest, Manly)	
	Pacific Highway (North Sydney)	Willoughby Rd (Roseville)	Freeway (Chatswood, Epping, Newcastle)	Freeway (Chatswood, Epping, Newcastle)

Notes:

i. All lane numbers are indicative of the Sydney Harbour Bridge numbering (West to East).
ii. Lane 3 becomes two lanes 350 metres south of High St, North Sydney – the most westerly lane 3 shall be the continuation of lane 3 from the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the other (eastern) being known as Lane 3.5 for explanation purposes.
iii. Lane 3.5 should take the same traffic as lane 4 minus Mount St Exit (as that causes too many lane changes).
iv. Lanes 3.5, 4 and 5 are all on the eastern side of the freeway divider (starting at High St), meaning traffic is unable to use the exits accessible by lanes 1, 2 and 3 after the division.

It would be highly recommended that dynamic (changeable) signs are installed to assist with the management of on-peak and off-peak traffic. The signage at the different times is on subsequent pages.

Normal Operation (Off-Peak four-four configuration on SHB)

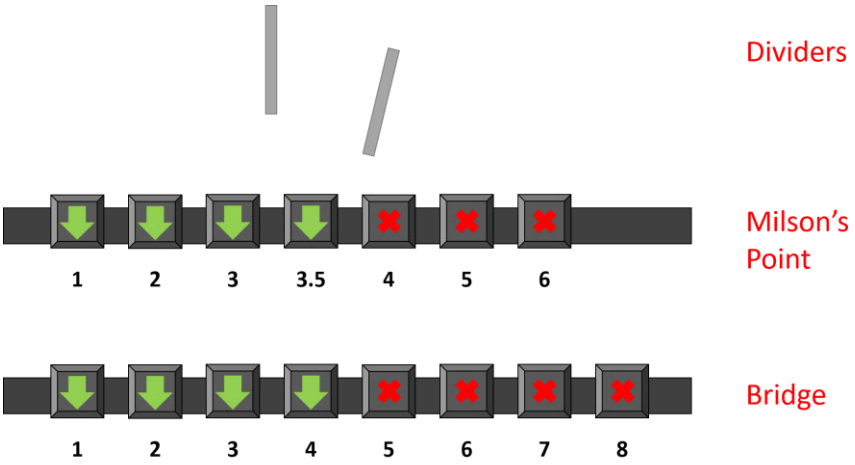

Figure 3: Lane Configuration Off-Peak

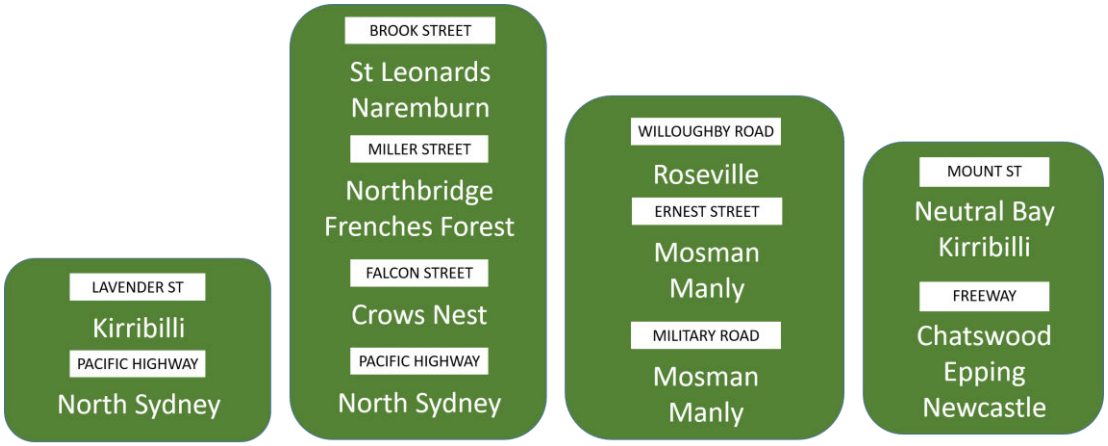

Figure 4: Off-Peak Site 3 Signage

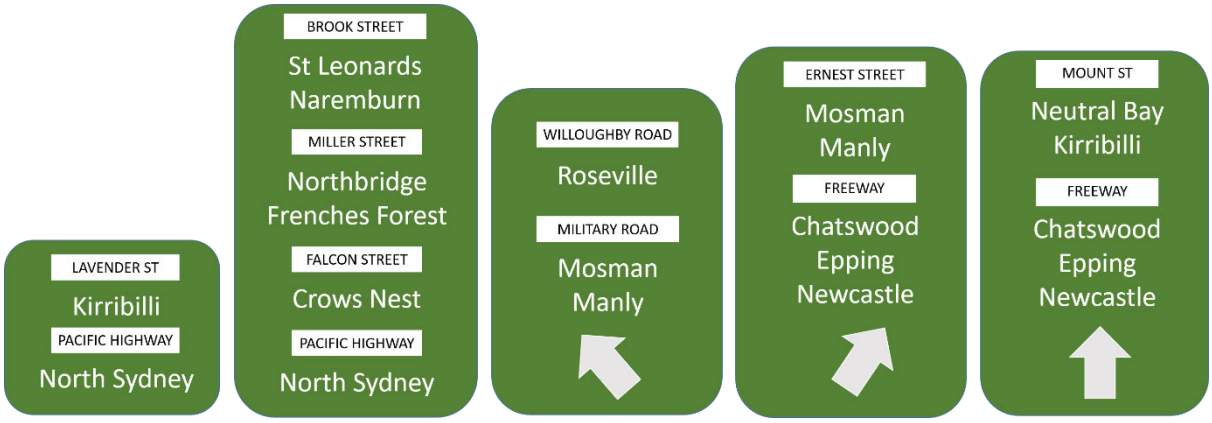

Figure 5: Off-Peak Site 1 Signage Upgrade

Notes:

- All Southbound Exits are in operation in this configuration
- Traffic travelling on the east side of the divider cannot go anywhere but Willoughby Rd, Pacific Highway or the Lane Cove Tunnel

AM Operation (AM-Peak three-five configuration)

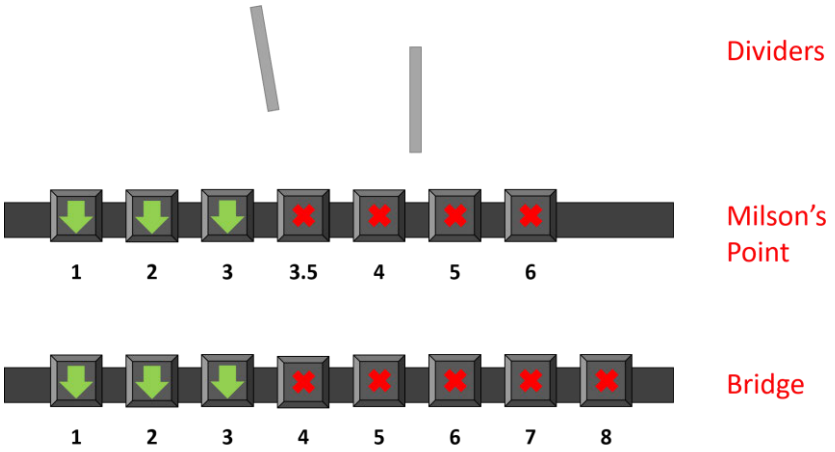

Figure 6: Lane Configuration AM-Peak

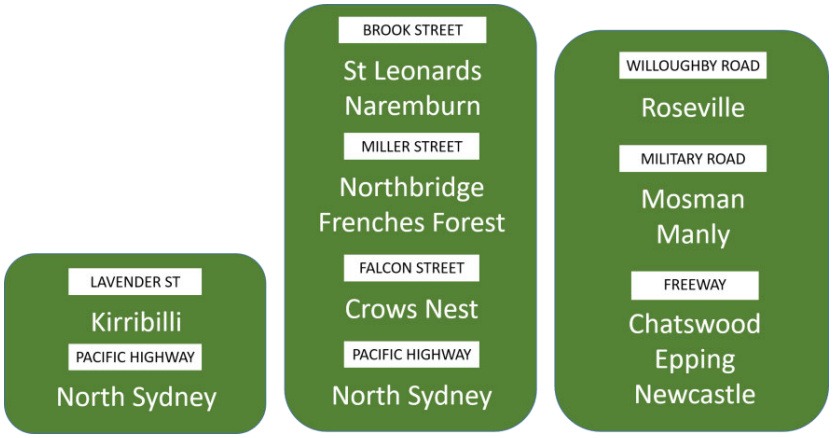

Figure 7: AM-Peak Site 3 Signage

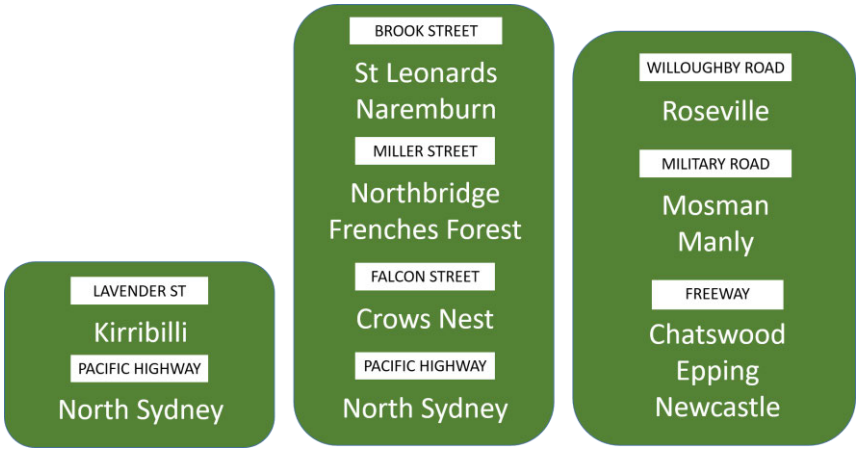

Figure 8: AM-Peak Site 1 Signage Upgrade

Notes:

- Ernest and Mount St Exits are reversible for AM Peak, therefore southbound not permitted to exit.
- East-Centre Corridor is dedicated to northbound traffic from Lower North Shore until Falcon St Northbound on-ramp.
- All traffic travels on the West side of divider at Milson's Point (no lanes 3.5, 4 or 5).

PM Operation (PM-Peak five-three configuration)

As far as I am aware, the freeway is not able to operate in the same manner as AM-peak (dedicating a whole carriageway to traffic – due to Northbound SHT portal location), however the SHB can be run in three lanes north, five lanes south configuration.

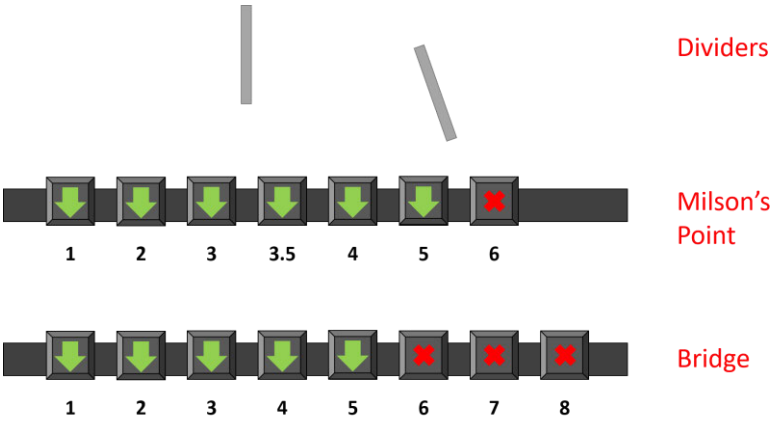

Figure 9: Lane Configuration PM-Peak

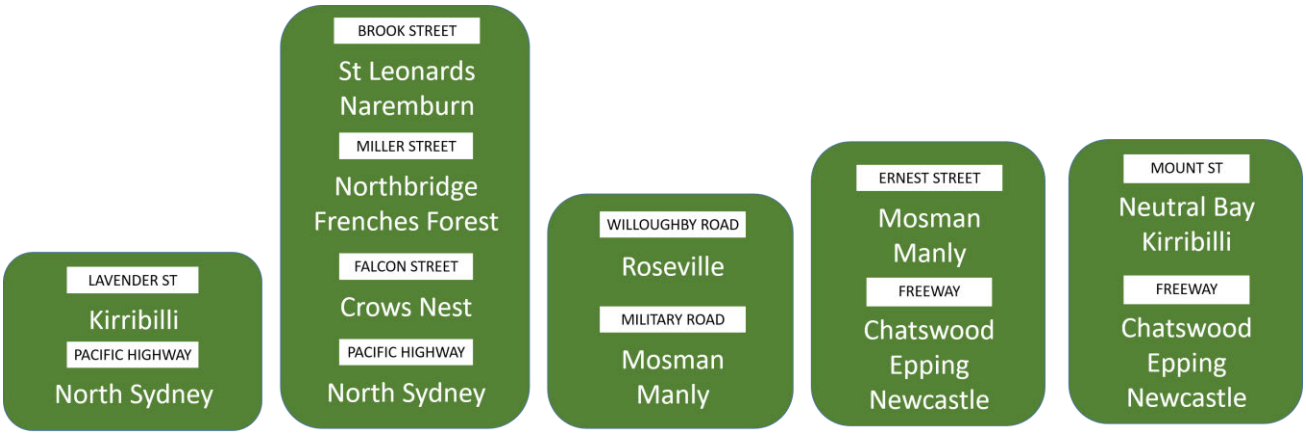

Figure 10: PM-Peak Site 3 Signage

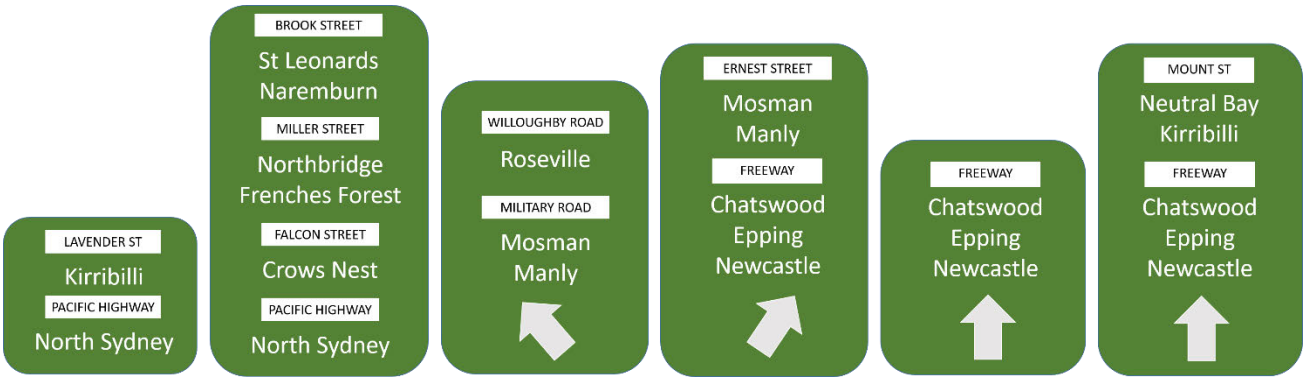

Figure 11: PM-Peak Site 1 Signage Upgrade

Notes:

- Additional Lane for Mount St Exit and traffic flow from Lane 5 on SHB
- Traffic already in Lane 5, can continue without changing lanes.

These recommended configurations will fix the off-peak and PM-peak issues at Cammeray south of the Miller St overpass.

Issues at Cammeray Southbound:

1. Traffic coming from Eastern Carriageway merges with Western Carriageway in centre-most lanes.
2. Traffic coming from Eastern Carriageway can attempt to go across to Brook St Exit
3. Traffic coming from Western Carriageway can attempt to join 'through lanes' to Lane Cove Tunnel.
4. (2) and (3) cause a situation where traffic attempts to cross each other.

Recommendations:

1. Implement proposed signage to reduce the number of vehicles taking the incorrect lanes at Milsons Point.
2. Remove merge for Southern/Western Carriageway traffic, creating a single lane merge for the Eastern Carriageway traffic in combination with recommendation (3) below.
3. Add bollards / safety cones for first the 420 metres from the merge point south of the Miller Street overpass to the beginning of the Brook St Exit. This would prevent traffic on the Eastern Carriageway attempting to cut across traffic. There would be one 'through lane' for the Eastern Carriageway going up to Willoughby or the Lane Cove Tunnel.

Recommendations (2) and (3) will remove issues (2), (3) and (4). All recommendations improve the flow and safety of this section of road.

Limitations:

1. Falcon St On Ramp can no longer be used to access Brook St
2. There is no way to exit the freeway from the Eastern Carriageway once joined at Milsons Point until Willoughby Rd.

Detailed diagrams are proved on the next page.

With all these recommendations implemented, I strongly believe that the Warringah Freeway will become much safer and efficient.

Figure 12: Warringah Freeway at Cammeray. Issues listed and problem zone identified.

Figure 13: Warringah Freeway at Cammeray. Proposed solutions labelled and identified.

END