

Submission
No 241

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 18 June 2021

Partially
Confidential

RESPONSE TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF THE WESTERN HARBOUR TUNNEL AND BEACHES LINK

June 17th, 2021

I would like to state upfront that I strongly object to the construction of the tunnel and the proposed upgrade for Warringah Freeway.

From my perspective, I am not aware of any alternative transport measures considered to ease traffic on Military Road and facilitate access to the city of residents north of the spit bridge and from the Northern Beaches.

Comments on the Western Harbour Tunnel and Upgrade to Warringah Freeway (WHT) project closed in March 2020. There were significant community concerns raised with 1200 submissions objecting to the project including a number of groups representing additional significant residents in the North Sydney LG. In September 2020, the revised EIS document was published. A review of this document indicates that no significant changes or adequate responses have been made to the objections raised by the community

The adequacy of the business case for the project, including the cost benefits ratio

In my opinion the business case is inadequate. I and other residents have been unable to locate a benefit cost analysis for the project. We have not seen an adequate cost benefit analysis for the projects.

The adequacy of the consideration of alternative options

Totally inadequate. There was no consideration of rail or metro options for either project and in particularly for the Beaches Link Tunnel.

The consultation methods and effectiveness, both with affected communities and stakeholders

Stakeholder and community engagement is covered in Chapter 7 of each EIS which indicate that substantial community consultation was undertaken. In my experience, consultation sessions were more of an information session with little opportunity for the community to question the design, the business case or effectively addressing concerns.

The NSW Planning Portal provides all of the submissions made to the EIS team in 2020 by communities, organisations and public authorities. These responses are summarised in the table below.

	Supported	Commented	Objected	Total
Western Harbour Tunnel				
Community	18	87	1270	1375
Organizations	1	5	53	59
Public Authority	1	15	4	20
Beaches Link				
Community	39	120	1282	1441
Organizations	2	21	71	94

Public Authority	1	1	12	14
Total	62	249	2692	3003
Per cent	2%	8%	90%	100%

Support for both projects as described in their EISs was limited with only 2% of respondents supporting and 90% objecting. While it is understandable that generally the number of people who make a submission are more likely to be opposing the project rather than supporting it, it is also true that the number objecting is much higher than the number of people who actually take the time to lodge their submission. So it is highly likely that a much higher number of people are against the project than the numbers would indicate.

The response from TfNSW to the objections raised was effectively non-existent as most objections were considered irrelevant and some were dismissed especially the significant increase in traffic congestion and traffic increase through local streets in the North Sydney LGA a major issue for the communities.

It is also worth noting here that North Sydney Council has made a detailed submissions to the EIS's; none of the points raised in the submission were addressed adequately.

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

The NSW government is projecting an increase in the population growth in the North Sydney LGA. This in itself will increase traffic on the local streets. Combined with increased traffic congestion due to the construction of the tunnels and the upgrade to the Warringah Freeway will impact the North Sydney LGA communities significantly.

The Covid pandemic has shown that work patterns have changed; a significant number of people continue to work from home at least on a part time basis. Commuting to work is less likely to continue at pre Covid levels, which in itself questions the need to upgrade roads to carry more commuters across Sydney.

The cost/benefit equation pre Covid may no longer be applicable to a post Covid travel/work/home situation. I suggest that a more robust investigation into this matter is undertaken before investing significant amounts of tax payers' money

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

This information needs to be published, so that residents have a better idea of the effectiveness of government investments and the benefits or costs of taxation use.

Whether the project is subject to the appropriate levels of transparency and account-ability that would be expected of a project delivered by a public sector body

In the publicly available documentation there does not appear to be clear information regarding the decisions explaining the chosen plan, no alternatives have been offered, no design options, no financial analysis, no business case, and no meaningful traffic impacts on the affected communities of North Sydney LGA.

The impact on the environment, including marine ecosystems

I can only comment on the environmental impacts on air pollution in the North Sydney LGA. No doubt there will be issues on marine ecosystems and potential for disturbing harbour sediments some of which may contain pollutants from previous industrial activity around some of the sites.

In terms of air quality, the proposed extraction stacks will increase air pollution. The EISs documentation project that emissions will decrease over time in the long term as electric vehicle usage becomes more common. In the short and medium term, environmental costs near the air extraction stacks at each end of the tunnels will be significant and will impact health outcomes for the communities.

The air quality in the North Sydney LGA is already marginal given the current bridge and tunnel traffic arrangements. The additional road capacity will undoubtedly increase vehicle movements and increase air pollution in the short and medium term.

I would also like to point out that the final paragraph of a report commissioned by the NSW Chief Scientist commenting on air quality review of the Beaches EIS the independent and highly qualified authors questioned the validity of the air quality assessments reported in the EISs documents.

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

Residents affected by noise, loss of scarce parking spots with construction for the Warringah Freeway Upgrade already starting, have reported that the response and measures put in place by TfNSW are either non-existent, an afterthought or totally inadequate.

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

In North Sydney, construction will have substantial negative impact on Balls Head, Balls Head and Bay roads, Alfred Street, Berry Street, Military Road, High Street, and will result in loss of scarce valuable green space in St Leonards Park, Cammeray Golf Club and a variety of smaller parcels of green space. It is worth noting that the North Sydney LGA has the least amount of green space per resident than any other local Council.