

Submission
No 260

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 18 June 2021

Partially
Confidential

1. I OBJECT: To the Western Harbour Tunnel (WHT) and Warringah Freeway (WF) upgrade on a number of grounds. This is an unwanted, flawed, unnecessary piece of infrastructure at great expense to the tax-payer's health and hip pocket. Radio host Mr Alan Jones slammed the business case for the proposed tunnel saying WHY has an extensive ROAD ONLY project been chosen over much wanted PUBLIC TRANSPORT options, or any other option?

I REQUEST full disclosure and would like to see published the BUSINESS CASE outlining WHY the WHT and WF Upgrade has been chosen over ALL other options. EG: An extension of the B-Line, a rail line from Dee Why to Chatswood and other public transport options. As taxpayers we have a right to know HOW and WHY our taxpayer funds are being spent. The purpose of this very expensive piece of infrastructure is to REDUCE congestion and EASE traffic flow. More roads mean more cars, increased pollution and increased traffic. A public transport option would move many more thousands of people per hour in comparison to numbers via a road. Failure to release the business case shows blatant lack of respect for tax-payers dollars.

2. I OBJECT to the PROJECT on grounds of COST!! The cost of WHT and WF Upgrade is a dual project with the Beaches Link. The current cost is quoted as \$16 billion – which could blow out to \$20 - \$26B. If this project goes ahead - I believe the amount spent on each resident in the Northern Beaches is \$53k. This is an excessive amount per resident, in an area of Sydney where population (compared to Western Sydney) is relatively stagnant. I also understand that there will be tolls both ways on the Harbour Bridge, as well as for the new tunnels and connections. Sydney already has the most expensive tollway system in the world. Not only do taxpayers have to pay for the building of this unwanted infrastructure BUT we have to pay per-use! Instead we should be investing in upgrading rural and regional train lines across Sydney. We should be FIXING existing problems, not building more roads. Problems such as Neutral Bay Public School (the most overcrowded school in the state per square metre). There are plans for this school to become a state-of-the-art learning centre. At present there is not enough classrooms to accommodate the children currently enrolled. These plans have been shelved. Tax-payers money should be spent on our kids education - NOT on infrastructure that will DAMAGE their health and well-being.

3. I OBJECT to the dire implications of reconfiguring the WF alone (to accommodate two tunnels, ventilation outlets, ramps and flow management) is now revealed. 26 schools across the tunnel route border the WF. This is the largest school district in Australia. The safety and welfare of children is of the upmost concern. The damage to the health of residents across the route is far-reaching. This needs proper and careful community consultation. Add to this a wide ranging and high impact 5-6 year construction project (which carries well documented risks) is exacerbating anxiety for many. This is preventing genuine engagement and consultation. In the light of all that has occurred this year and the complexity and impact of this project - I ask that the RMS and Department of Planning formally suspend the EIS process (and that of the Beaches Link EIS) until after the virus crisis has passed and families can return to normal life. A suspension is in the best interest of our community and our school children.

4. I OBJECT to the deliberate publishing of incorrect information in the EIS. Incorrect figures & terminology used to downplay the damage caused by the tunnel. The EIS states that each school is estimated to have 100 children. Not true! Primary schools in the area have closer to 1000 children (not 100). High schools in the area, are over 1000 students each. The TERM: "Community Receivers" is used in the EIS when referencing those MOST affected by this project. We all KNOW this should read: "school children". The use of vastly incorrect figures (school numbers) and the use of incorrect terms - shows one of two things; 1. To bias the EIS in favour of the WHT and WF upgrade. 2. Lack of time the government had to prepare the EIS.

All proving that this project is being unnecessarily rushed through. PLEASE amend the EIS and all results to show correct figures and plain English. The EIS stack height is only 20m, and this was chosen for aesthetic reasons. The EIS models show there would be LESS pollution if the stacks were 40m. There would ALSO be LESS pollution if the stacks had best practice filtration. I object to the number of support sites needed and scale of work required and major changes to road routes and access.

5. I OBJECT to the disruption of traffic. 6000 construction movements per day and night - needed to keep the Freeway operational during the construction period. This will cause great disruption to the movement of traffic. This will greatly disrupt school-childrens' journey to school, and will FORCE construction traffic and local traffic onto local streets, which is unsafe for pedestrians. In North Sydney there are already pedestrian crossings that are at a fail level. Please address how will this be mitigated and pedestrians and cyclists and all road users kept safe and moving?

6. I OBJECT – to this project due to fears for the health and well-being of my children. The double unfiltered ventilation stack very near schools in this area are of grave concern to me. It is unacceptable to have unfiltered stacks in longitudinal tunnels. It is unprecedented in the world. The North Sydney area is already highly polluted and the unfiltered double stack will increase pollution levels as more cars use the infrastructure. Our school children have the right to breathe clean air. Due to bushfires last summer there were many days when air pollution was well in excess of recommended safe levels. We have a commitment to reduce our carbon footprint, not to increase it!

7. I OBJECT to the LACK OF TIME given to respond to this devastating project. One of the reasons is the consultation time occurred at the start of school term – traditionally a time of much upheaval in a family. The other reason is due to COVID19 pandemic. Due to this - school communities and parents (such as myself) have been increasingly stressed adjusting daily activities to best protect children and our communities. COVID19 has placed more stress on families who are challenged to find time to review the EIS. As we are now bracing for the full impact of COVID 19 and still recovering from bushfires and floods - we have too much to contend with. We need more time to review the EIS - as it is clear this is a far larger project with much broader ramifications than originally advised. (Reference Design Plan). The EIS documents are lengthy (with over 9000+ pages including appendices) and complex. We need more time to comprehend the long-term effects and respond accordingly. The community has requested clarification on the complex descriptions in the EIS in early March 2020. With a high proportion of working parents struggling due to the virus, (extra responsibility such as working from, home-schooling, taking care of elderly parents) there is no time to ponder the EIS. Families have already faced so much this year - with the impact of bushfire smoke (kids with asthma), severe storms which have damaged homes - now followed by COVID-19. The crisis is having a huge impact on people's ability to engage with and understand this complex project. All of this has had a cumulative effect on stress-levels. We need more time.

I REQUEST the plan be amended to INCLUDE the 11 Construction site locations documented in the EIS. The Truck and Parking numbers have been added from the EIS Information Booklet and Construction Chapter. Merlin St and Cammeray Golf Course site (with exit on Earnest St) will have a considerable impact on traffic flows during construction.

I REQUEST MORE TIME - so that due QUALITY time can be given for community consultation! The additional drop-in sessions have not seen a full complement of the community due to social distancing concerns. These need to be re-instated at the time of re-release. The consultation period needs to be extended.