

Submission
No 268

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 16 June 2021

Partially
Confidential

The Hon Daniel Mookhey MLC

Chair

Parliamentary Inquiry into the impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link

16 June 2021

Dear Honourable Member Mookhey,

This submission summarises my concerns in relation to the proposed Western Harbour Tunnel (WHT) project.

My concerns are outlined below:

1: Environmental Issues

In respect the consideration of alternative options, there does not seem to have been any serious consideration of building a deeper tunnel under the harbour, which would eliminate the need for dredging the contaminated sediment on the Harbour floor, thereby avoiding a major environmental risk.

I am concerned about the risks associated with dealing with contaminated sediments on the harbour floor. These occur across the route of the WHT in addition to construction support sites such as at Berrys Bay. This issue relates to the impact on the environment, including marine ecosystems. There are very high levels of toxic chemicals in the sediments, including TBT, mercury, dioxins and arsenic. If these are released during dredging and construction there is a high risk of environmental damage to the harbour, substantial fish kills and risks to human health. How will this be monitored during construction?

2: Affected Communities

In regard to the way such construction affects communities, the practice in earlier stages of the Westconnex Project has been to define “affected Properties” as those within a maximum distance of 50m from the closest construction. Media has reported damage to homes in Haberfield at a distance of 250m from construction. So I believe that the somewhat arbitrary 50m definition needs to be revised and removed. I am really worried about the impact of noise and vibration on nearby homes.

3: Human health concerns

The EIS does not adequately address the impacts of noise, offensive odours, air quality and exposure to contaminated sediments through aerosol spread of transported/stored sediment and decrease in air quality due to use of unfiltered air stacks. This is in addition to probable noise generated by machinery/equipment/ barges removing sediment.

4: Traffic and Transport Issues

In regard to post Covid 19 traffic impact, traffic patterns have not yet been established. Many people have not yet returned to using public transport and are driving to work. This will most likely change in the future. It is also far from clear what proportion of workers will work totally or partially from home in the future. This could have a large impact on future traffic volumes.

Public transport has not been sufficiently considered. The WHT project would create another toll road – another tax to the people of NSW.

The project as designed would result in more cars on the road causing a significant increase in emissions and contribute to climate change. If the NSW Government is serious about the net zero emissions goal, the need for the WHT and associated projects should be reassessed. We need serious action on climate change in a smarter approach than digging tunnels – with better public transport as the key.

5: Business Model

In reference to the Business Case for the WHT, I would like to highlight that almost every Tolled Tunnel project constructed in Australia to date has fallen well short of their target objectives and, in some cases, projects have been disastrous financially.

Yours sincerely,