

**Submission  
No 254**

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

**Name:** Mrs Marjan van der Burg

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I am opposed to the Beaches Link Tunnel for a variety of reasons linked to the Terms of Reference:

(a) the adequacy of the business case for the project, including the cost benefits ratio,  
There has been no business case and cost-benefit analysis performed for the Beaches Link as a stand-alone project, nor has anything been released publicly. The Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link tunnels are separate projects and merits of each must be assessed separately. If this is done fairly and transparently, I would not be surprised to learn that the business case for the Beaches Link project isn't there. If this analysis has been done, it should be shared with the general public.

(b) the adequacy of the consideration of alternative options  
I do not believe the team have looked at alternatives in a holistic manner. They have not given sufficient consideration to other options such as increased public transport – where is the business case for rail, tram, light rail or bus options? What about improving bike and e-bike infrastructure?

(c) the extent to which the project is meeting the original goals of the project  
The stated objectives to the projects are vague statements about reducing congestion and making faster journeys. There are no tangible, measurable goals or outcomes mentioned. I fail to see how the general objective of improving transport on the Northern Beaches will be achieved through building the Beaches Link Tunnel. This objective can be more easily achieved with less financial impact through more flexible public transport within the Northern Beaches and an increase in peak time bus capacity. We do not need any new infrastructure projects that put more cars on the road in our neighbourhoods, which are already over-full in summer and lack the infrastructure to accommodate more. Better public transportation would benefit more people (and would be better for the environment)

(d) the consultation methods and effectiveness, both with affected communities and stakeholders,  
While the team working on this obviously couldn't control COVID restrictions, it is not difficult to see that virtual-only consultation without opportunities for questions from the public to be addressed is no adequate for a project with as wide-reaching implications as this one. Personally, I remain very concerned about the unfiltered stacks which will add to the high air pollution levels. I worry what this will mean for the health of residents, especially our vulnerable children.

(e) whether the project is subject to the appropriate levels of transparency and accountability that would be expected of a project delivered by a public sector body  
A business case and cost-benefit analysis should be carried out and publicly released for transportation options, including viable public transportation alternatives. I am concerned to note that Transport Minister Andrew Constance has stated publicly that he wants to sign contracts for the construction of the Beaches Link project before the state election in 2023 – has the Minister already made up his mind? This does not leave me feeling confident that there is a transparent planning process to assess projects fairly on their merits

(f) the adequacy of processes for accessing and responding to noise, vibration and other impacts on residents, during construction and operationally,  
The construction of this project will bring enormous volume of traffic to our local roads, which increases the risks of traffic accidents and incidents involving pedestrians (as a mother of two

young children, I worry for their safety). The construction workers will also need to park their cars in our neighbourhoods, reducing already limited capacity on our streets.

(j) the impact on the environment, including marine ecosystems

The impact to our environment will be irreparable. Manly Dam and Flat Rock Gully are very important ecosystems. Pollution in our waterways will impact our ability to enjoy our local beaches and parks. The water quality of the much-loved beach and park at Clontarf will undoubtedly suffer when polluted sediment is disturbed in Middle Harbour. If the tunnel is constructed, the water table will fall, and groundwater flows into Burnt Bridge Creek will fall 96% - this area is an important natural habitat for flora and fauna, as well as being much loved by the community

As things stand, it does not appear that sufficient emphasis has been placed on the assessment of environmental impact.

(m) any other related matter

I do not understand how this tunnel project aligns to the Paris Agreement. The world needs solutions to bring us to net zero to stop climate change. Not another infrastructure geared at encouraging more individuals to drive their cars around an already over-crowded city. Why doesn't the department focus on initiatives that improve public transportation and other green commuting methods?

I urge the Inquiry to fully and transparently consider whether this project is a sensible use of public money, and if it will genuinely improve our city for the future we aspire to create for our children