INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTERN HARBOUR TUNNEL AND BEACHES LINK

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I object to this project for a number of reasons:

1. Business case

o Everyone should be worried when their government refuses to release the business case. Withholding information from the public who are the actual people paying for the proposed Beaches tunnel is highly suspicious. One has to ask the question 'why isn't the business case easily public accessible?

o Where are the forecasted figures for how many commuters would take the tunnel from Manly Vale? I can see that commuters living further up the peninsula such as Dee Why and further north could possibly choose to take the entrance to the tunnel on Wakehurst parkway but I question whether commuters further south would use the tunnel starting at Manly Vale. Is the tunnel from Manly Vale required, is there sufficient data supporting this?

2. Health concerns –

o Physical health: International studies have shown the dangers to health, particularly in children, of being near many open lanes of traffic. This includes increases in asthma and impacts on child brain development. The entrance on Burnt Bridge deviation would increase traffic lanes from 6 to 12 near a number of schools, including a traffic light, and add a nearby smoke stack. We should not take risks when it comes to childrens' health and safety. This was the position expressed by Planning Minister Rob Stokes, when he was Education Minister, stating: "I won't be party to putting stacks near kids … There is no way in hell that I'd support any development¬ that would put the lives of pupils, teachers and parents at risk". In addition to this, the earlier plans for the tunnel, shared with Seaforth Public school community indicated that the tunnel entrance would be further from the school compared to the latest plans. Now the Environmental Impact Statement indicates that the tunnel entrance, including 12 lanes of traffic, smoke stack and related construction works, with impacts for air quality, noise and vibration, will be directly parallel with the school. While modeling indicates air quality may improve slightly for the school area, that is based on expected traffic patterns. Actual traffic patterns will depend on many factors, such as whether good public transport options are created through well-designed and well-used express bus services through the tunnel, which have yet to be determined. The planned privatisation of NSW bus services adds more uncertainty and cause for concern for that factor.

o Mental health – the path next to Burnt Bridge Creek provides residents with a safe and shady area to exercise and commute either by walking, cycling or exercising your dog. It increases our mental health being and has provided a vital function during the lockdown and also afterwards when more people are choosing to stay at home and work. Having 96% of the water disappearing once completed will reduce this area's appeal and health benefits.

2. Public transport – With the plans of increasing dwellings on the Northern beaches and particularly around the Northern Beaches Hospital, more people will need to commute. The future for commuting should be through improved environmental friendly public transport, not for people travelling in individual cars. Prior to committing to developing a $14 billion dollars tunnel, a more thorough review on alternative public transports needs to be completed and shared e.g. a train line from Chatswood to Dee Why following Warringah Road with a stop a the hospital might be a viable option. We should ensure public transport is working prior to committing to building the tunnel. The B-line seems to have improved the commute for certain commuters but for the community of North Balgowlah the opposite has in fact occurred. Changes to NSW buses in late 2020, without community consultation, has left commuters with unreliable buses (either late or don't show up) and a trip to the city taking 10 to 15min longer (one way) and that excludes the time walking to the bus stop since the bus stops have also changed. Balgowlah is the one of the communities that will also be most affected by the actual building of the tunnel i.e. our roads will be used for trucks (even though exact roads have not yet been determined), how long will a trip to the city take during the many years of building the

tunnel? We're also the community that probably won't' save time on taking the tunnel but paying for it in all other aspects. What will be done to reduce travel time particularly during the many years it will take to build the tunnel?

3. Environmental impact

o Burnt Bridge creek that runs through North Balgowlah is home to a range of animals and flora. It's a vital ecological corridor of regenerated habitat. The construction and tunnelling activities are projected to reduce the natural water flow of the creek by 79%. This will have a devastating effect on the plants and animals that currently rely on the creek. As part of construction, approximately 400,000 litres of wastewater per day will be discharged into the creek from the site that will run into Queenscliff lagoon. The site is categorized as flood-prone, and it is unacceptable for any waste water, pollutants or contamination by construction soils to enter the creek system and impact all catchment areas downstream. The NSW government claims that 90% of the site will be returned after construction as public green space, however this is only achieved by the acquisition of 34 homes on Dudley St, and the community questions how usable this green space will be next to large roads and an unfiltered exhaust stack.

o Middle Harbour - Sediment samples revealed levels above safe guidelines of heavy metals, mercury, lead and pesticides. If released during dredging, these would have devastating impacts upon the seagrass, aquatic life including endangered marine species such as the White's seahorse, and people enjoying swimming, boating and fishing in the surrounding areas of the Spit, Clontarf, Beauty Point and Sailors Bay.