

**Submission  
No 304**

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

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SUBMISSION: Parliamentary Inquiry – Beaches Link Tunnel

We write with concern regarding the proposed Beaches Link Tunnel. Our current concerns lie with the following, as aligned with some of the points labelled a) to m) in the Inquiry Terms of Reference.

**(a) the adequacy of the business case for the project, including the cost benefits ratio**

We believe the business case of the project is not adequate in its current format. It appears that servicing a growing population (ie. to 2037) is the main project need. If we are reading the data correctly, according to the NSW Transport traffic volume viewer website (<https://roads-waterways.transport.nsw.gov.au/about/corporate-publications/statistics/traffic-volumes/aadt-map/index.html#/?z=18&q=Spit%20Bridge,%20New%20South%20Wales,%20Australia&id=34001&df=3>) there has not been a significant increase in peak hour travel (both a.m./p.m. and Northbound/Southbound) over the past 9 years. (In fact, there is a slight trend downwards). If the past 9 years can be indicative of the future 9 years, a business case relying on more vehicles entering this current road system isn't valid, despite population growth. We are not experts in this area, but if we are interpreting the data correctly, we are concerned that the tunnel is an avenue to *bring* population growth to the Northern Beaches, rather than *respond* to a current or future demand. As such, the business case for the project is not adequate.

**(b) the adequacy of the consideration of alternative options**

Chapter 4 of the EIS indicates other options were considered. The “Do Nothing” option appears discredited not because of the current traffic, but because of a predicted population growth that such a network would not be able to service – both in terms of general commuter traffic out of/returning to the Northern Beaches, and larger vehicles (freight/construction). Please see our point in (a) above regarding population growth and traffic volume.

Chapter 4 of the EIS also indicates that “Travel Demand Management measures [of which, flexible working arrangements to reduce peak hour trips is one] would require considerable changes in social attitudes, travel behaviour and government policy”. COVID-19 has absolutely impacted these areas and, as such, Travel Demand Management as an option should be further considered.

**(f) the consultation methods and effectiveness, both with affected communities and stakeholders**

Consultation has been ongoing and there have been design changes based on such consultation with our community. It has, however, been difficult with COVID-19 restrictions and the EIS documentation is extensive but is difficult to understand in terms of community and personal impact. As example, only in reviewing the EIS did I come to understand a dedicated construction support site would be less than 400 metres from my home. At no other point has this been clear to me. (I can, now, see a Fact sheet dated March 2021 where this is mentioned but I have not seen this fact sheet, specific to my area, before). This location is along a path we travel each day with our dog and travel every weekend with our bikes or on foot as a family. This location sits at the base of an overpass used twice per day for my child's commute to school. This location sits at the base of the main route for us to leave our immediate area to

shop for all essentials, frequent local cafes, play at parks and the beach, visit friends, and attend medical services and fitness centres. My child would need to walk through this location to do his casual magazine delivery job. This is a significant personal impact of which I was not aware. I do not think the consultation has been effective.

**(g) 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**

We are still in the midst of the pandemic and, as such, it is too early to understand the impact of the pandemic on road travel. Travel Demand Management as an option should be further considered.

**(i) 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**

As before, consultation has been difficult with COVID-19 restrictions. The EIS documentation is extensive but is difficult to understand in terms of community and personal impact. Changes often come to light via media announcements, rather than through a targeted consultation process. There have been a number of “surprises” in the EIS documentation. The impression is that this process has not been as transparent as expected.

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

Dust emissions during the project are deemed to be high in the Balgowlah area, including those containing contaminants, yet Manly Dam, located in this zone has not been included for analysis. Manly Dam is a public recreation area where families swim, picnic and hike, and is a well-known and used mountain-biking route. Manly Dam also contains a number of threatened and sensitive species. Manly Dam has been included in the Chapter on Biodiversity, where the analysis concluded the project “at the Wakehurst Parkway would not decrease the water quality of... Manly dam or Manly Creek”. However, it does not seem to mention or assess the impact of the Balgowlah operation. This appears to be an oversight and needs to be assessed.

**(k) the adequacy of processes for accessing and responding to noise, vibration and other impacts on residents, during construction and operationally**

As a resident of North Balgowlah, the traffic impact during construction cannot be underestimated. Regarding commute and bus/vehicle/bike/walking access: Our main access roads to travel out of the neighbourhood are Wakehurst Parkway, the Kitchener/Myrtle overpass, and Bangaroo into Seaforth towards Burnt Bridge Creek Deviation/Sydney Road/Spit Bridge. All three of these routes will be under construction for 5+ years. The construction noise arising from these three points surrounding our neighbourhood, cannot also not be underestimated.

Of additional concern is the rerouting of heavy vehicle traffic to the tunnel from Mona Vale Road (Chapter 9 of the EIS). This will create additional traffic noise in operation not only from the additional vehicles overall, but from the rerouting of these heavy vehicles.

As well, in operation the addition of a new signalised intersection connecting a new access road with Burnt Bridge Creek Deviation and the tunnel will create additional noise and lights, changing from the current situation of through-traffic to one of stop-start traffic.

**(l) the impact of the project on nearby public sites, including Yurulbin Point and Dawn Fraser Baths**

The construction of the new access road at Balgowlah to connect the tunnel to Sydney Road has a significant impact on Sydney Road traffic into the Northern Beaches, in particular, beaches and their adjacent neighbourhoods accessed via Sydney Road (ie. Manly, Fairlight, Forty Baskets, Clontarf, Little Manly, Manly Wharf and other sites along the Spit-Manly scenic walkway). These areas cannot afford additional vehicles, where parking is at a premium on weekends even for locals. Current public car park infrastructure will not be sufficient for the increased traffic that the tunnel will bring to these destination areas. Narrow and congested streets will be unable to cope with increased vehicular traffic. Has an analysis been conducted on the current and anticipated traffic volumes along Sydney Road into Fairlight and Manly?

**(m) any other related matter.**

Chapter 9, page 37 of the EIS specifically addresses an increase in traffic, as a result of this project, through North Balgowlah onto Kitchener Street. Our neighbourhood is already investigating traffic management options due to increased vehicles traveling through the area as a “rat run”. This route is the same route travelled by children walking and cycling to and from the local school. The intersection of Daisy Street and Myrtle/Kitchener overpass has also been a concern for increased traffic driving too quickly through the intersection, for bus drivers navigating the narrow streets, and for vehicles parking illegally too close to the intersection so that persons crossing the road and vehicles exiting Daisy Street cannot see vehicles approaching. The bus stop at this intersection is used by a number of students in the area, commuting to a number of schools. The EIS states that management of this traffic increase will be conducted further and in consultation with council. I believe this is too significant an issue to not consult on and address prior to project approval.

The Kitchener Street construction support site is mentioned in Chapter 20, Land Use and Property, p 36 as being “currently vacant and is not used for public recreation purposes”. This is confusing – if I am reading the map correctly, that land is currently at the base of the Kitchener/Myrtle overpass and is used regularly for recreation – it’s part of a bike and walking trail through from Seaforth and North Balgowlah to Queenscliff / Manly, and part of the trail that Mountain Bikers and cyclists use to access North Balgowlah and Manly Dam.

Thank you,

Janine Joyce