

**Submission
No 361**

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

Name: Ms Sue-Ellen Smith

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I wish to object to the Beaches Link Tunnel for the following reasons:

1. As a result of Covid-19 the demand for new roads will decrease as a much larger number of people will now work from home at least part of the time. This will also greatly reduce the revenue from tolls to pay for the astronomical cost and upkeep of the tunnel.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-05-25/work-from-home-here-to-stay-australia-talks-data-shows/100161200>

-Infrastructure Australia's December 2020 report Infrastructure beyond Covid-19 states:

-A 2020 Gartner CFO survey reports that 74% (CFOs) expect a shift whereby some employees remote work permanently, indicating significant uncertainty for CBDs following COVID-19.

-In similar vein, The Sydney Morning Herald of 20 April 2021 quotes the NSW Chief Economist, Stephen Walters:

We are not coming in 100 per cent five days a week and so the reality is the demand for office space is not going to be what it used to be.

2. As Sydney's population increases even the NSW planning Minister Mr Rob Stokes says Sydney needs to move away from being dependent on cars and must move towards mass transport systems eg, trains, busses and trams

<https://www.whichcar.com.au/car-news/new-south-wales-minister-rob-stokes-ev-debate-sydney-scrap-cars>. Building more roads only forces people to buy more cars which very quickly leads to more congestion with only a small respite.

3. There has been no cost-benefit analysis released to indicate that the vehicle tunnel is the best transport option for the northern beaches. The tunnel also excludes many suburbs on the north shore which can't access the tunnel. Public Transport

4. Public Transport:

The WHT EIS does not assess the impact of the B-line buses on congestion on the Harbour Bridge and Military Road. Nor does it take account of the possible impact of a rapid and frequent public transport link between the identified growth area around Frenchs Forest and Chatswood when combined with the metro to the city to be completed in 2024. The metro will have an estimated Chatswood to Barangaroo trip time of 9 minutes (11 minutes to Martin Place) and a departure every 4 minutes.

The BLT EIS mentions the planned rapid bus service from Dee Why to Chatswood operating in conjunction with the new metro but blithely dismisses its potential impact with:

While these projects would contribute to reducing congestion... they would not be sufficient to resolve the existing road network capacity constraints between the lower North Shore and the Northern Beaches. This is due to the complexity of journey patterns and trip purposes within Greater Sydney and the dispersed nature of origin and destination points for an individual journey.

No mention is made of Census journey to work data showing that 52.1% of Northern Beaches residents work in their own Local Government Area (LGA) and 65% of the remainder work in either the City of Sydney, North Sydney, Willoughby or Ryde LGAs. Given that the EIS refers to the Military Road/Spit Road and Warringah Road/Eastern Valley Way corridors generally operating over capacity during peak periods but not at other times, journey to work data becomes particularly relevant.

The BLT EIS shows that the Warringah Road corridor is both busier and more congested than the Spit/Military Road corridor while being less used by public transport, reinforcing the need to consider public transport alternatives utilising this corridor.

5. There is a high risk of contamination of waterways and local suburbs from toxic soil. Historical analysis of previous land use has ignored potential sources of dangerous contaminants such as the Hallstrom refrigerator plant, despite it being mentioned in the historical study referred

6. Wildlife and Habitat

The tunnel works will result in the clearing of over 16 acres of bushland habitat at the top of a catchment with flow on effects to the rest of Flat Rock Gully, Tunks Park, Middle Harbour, the Sailors Bay foreshores, and local and regional north-south and east-west wildlife corridors.

The futures of Flat Rock Gully and the currently pristine foreshores of Clive Park are unclear and part of this bushland/shoreline habitat may be lost to our area forever.

Hundreds of local species will lose their habitat, be driven away by loss of habitat, noise, lights and contamination or bulldozed under during construction.

Numerous threatened species of animals (including the Powerful Owl and microbats) and plants have been identified in the EISs as being affected by the projects and proposed ameliorations are inadequate. The use of biodiversity offsetting to buy credits elsewhere when local animals are lost merely drives species extinctions in our LGA.

7. Marine

The environmental health of Middle Harbour and foreshores has improved dramatically over the last few decades in terms of the clarity of the water, return of sea organisms and of marine fish and animals. The health of these waters is threatened by the destruction of foreshore areas, dredging of the harbour floor, potential for existing contamination to be redispersed, storing of contaminated materials and the increase in marine traffic on Middle Harbour and across to Spit Point. More than 70 threatened species around Middle Harbour are at risk during construction and from the disruption of contaminated sediment.

8. Climate Change

Broader environmental impacts such as the climate change impacts of greater car use, compared to public transport have not been considered.

9 Air Quality

The impact on air quality, as compared to the public transport alternatives, has not been considered.

10 Vibration

Proposed ameliorations are insufficient to protect geological and Indigenous cultural features from dangers identified in the EISs due to vibration. Vibration and underground tunnelling can lead to subsidence under homes and major cracks to structures as occurred with Westconnex