

**Submission  
No 392**

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

**Name:** Mr David Moser

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1. Overall the tunnel to the Northern Beaches (NB) appears to involve enormous cost to the NSW taxpayer, disruption to NB residents for many years, permanent damage to the NB environment, and considerable uncertainty over what if any benefit will result. Recent changes arising from COVID including working from home and the near-universal substitution of Zoom (etc) for face-to-face meetings has changed traffic patterns and so increased the uncertainty of those benefits further. I appreciate that with record low interest rates and a need to stimulate the NSW economy infrastructure spending seems attractive, but the NB is the wrong place to do it. Instead invest in fast rail to the Central Coast and Newcastle - areas with enormous potential for growth of housing, office space (if needed) and a wide range of small and large businesses.

2. If the tunnel really MUST go ahead then the stacks must be filtered. The EIS cites uncertainties about the effect of traffic fumes, but the burden of proof should rest with the NSW Government - risking the health of local children is simply not acceptable. Unless there is convincing evidence that the stacks and fumes will NOT have a negative health impact on the local community then filters must be costed in and installed. (Alternatively delay the tunnel by 10 years or so, by which time hopefully most vehicles will be electric).

3. More work needs to be done on the environmental impact of the tunnel entrances. The plan (or need?) to pump away huge amounts of water to save the tunnels from flooding will leave Burnt Bridge Creek pretty much dry and have a currently unassessed impact on both the bushlands and domestic properties across a wide area of North Balgowlah. As the land dries out can we expect subsidence? Will there be a die-off of trees? What consideration has been given to alternative models, including pumping a proportion of the water to the top of the (Burnt Bridge) creek? After all, all of that water has to go somewhere - why not let some of it go down the creek?