

Submission
No 395

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

Name: Mrs Kerrie Alexander

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The Hon. Daniel Mookhey MLC
Chair
Public Works Committee
NSW Legislative Council
Parliament House
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Dear Members of the Public Works Committee,

Submission to the Inquiry into the Impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to this inquiry regarding these projects. I strongly object to the Western Harbour tunnel and Beaches Link projects and urge you to immediately recommend that the NSW Government reconsider these plans.

I have lived on the Northern Beaches on/off since 1986 and in North Balgowlah since 2013. Our family of four regularly utilises public transport to travel across the city, the CBD, lower north shore, and north-western suburbs. Before COVID-19, we regularly commuted via bus into the city for work and University. Otherwise, our car is utilised mostly for local use, to drive to the beach or shopping facilities or else to drive regionally across the state. Having lived in Singapore for 2 years, where we became expert MRT users commuting on a low cost metro system with trains running every 4 minutes, it was quite frankly, a shock to return home to an antiquated Northern Beaches bus system with buses running every 20 to 30 minutes and frequently delayed by traffic congestion both locally and across the city. Imagine my surprise, when the solution to commuting issues was announced as another expensive Sydney toll road with no dedicated bus lanes or consideration of light/metro rail to make getting around Sydney easier for just one subset of road users (private car commuters).

My family will be heavily impacted by these projects particularly the proposed Beaches Link Tunnel access points, both located within the main thoroughfares of Sydney Road/Wakehurst Parkway that we drive regularly. I am extremely concerned by the lack of consideration for improving walkability and public transport to address health and equity issues, which forces more people into private cars as they age. Favours private car commuting over public and active transport, means nothing is planned for local liveability. Both local area traffic and pollution has increased significantly in the past year since COVID-19 impacts forced many families (like ours) to work locally. With the planned future increases in population density for the northern beaches, this will only get worse in the future. I want to see Sydney that has better future planning embedded in all decisions made today that considers both equity, health and liveability, with opportunities focused on a transition to a cleaner, more efficient transport system.

I have previously submitted a detailed submission as to why I object to these projects. Please find attached this submission which I have also cross referenced to your terms below:

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

- The estimated cost of building the tunnels exceeds \$14billion yet hidden costs include damage to iconic Sydney Harbour, bushland, wildlife, air quality, increased traffic and congestion. The community deserves to see proper justification for the projects, as it also appears that none of our elected representatives have been able to complete due diligence in support of these projects, and certainly north shore residents have no confidence in the adequacy of this business case or of the benefit of increased toll costs for commuters.

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

- Please see Beaches Link Submission (attached), page 2 - paragraph 3. I would further comment that alternative options such as light rail or metro to Chatswood do not appear to have been considered at all with the toll road a forgone conclusion at the outset. Considering the success of the Sydney light rail network, the Parramatta light rail (under construction) and the outstanding success of the metro line out to

Rouse Hill, together with the planned population density increase along the northern beaches, a lack of sustainable transport options together with high toll road network costs for users is not acceptable.

(e) the extent to which the project is meeting the original goals of the project,

- One of the project objectives, was to improve streetscapes, sustainability and liveability across the Eastern City and North districts by reducing congestion and reduce travel times, delays. As per page 2 (paragraph 3) of my Beaches Link submission, impacts on local traffic volumes have not been considered for the Northern Beaches. The current design with two proposed access points at the southernmost point of the northern beaches does not appear to address congestion along major thoroughfares on Warringah road/Wakehurst Parkway/Mona Vale Road/Pittwater Road/Condamine Street.

(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,

- See my Beaches Link Submission (page 2, paragraph 3) attached. Since that submission, our family of four have all adjusted our travel patterns due to the Covid-19 pandemic. My husband and I now work from home full-time and will not return to the office. My adult daughter who commuted by car throughout the pandemic has recently moved to the western suburbs to be closer to her workplace. The commute time through Warringah Road (to avoid tolls) has increased substantially and the high cost of tolls on the M2 are prohibitive for a Health Care Worker's daily commute. Any project must address the issue that Public transport options to the western suburbs are limited, exceedingly slow (with multiple transfers) for most Northern Beaches residents.

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

- Please see page 1 Beaches Link Submission, paragraphs 1 and 2 attached

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

- Please see page 2 Beaches Link Submission, paragraph 4 attached

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

- Please see page 1 Beaches Link Submission, paragraph 1 and 2 attached As per the survey conducted by Committee for Sydney (Life in Sydney Report 2020) one of the most popular aspects of living in Sydney include access to great facilities and a beautiful natural environment. It is unacceptable that these projects impact such a high number of significant and beautiful natural environments across the lower north shore/northern beaches and that there will be extensive disruption and displacement of flora and fauna in these areas.

I am happy to have my name published.

Yours Sincerely,

Kerrie Alexander

North Balgowlah NSW 2093

I object to the completion of this project as follows:

1. Biodiversity impacts on Burnt Bridge Creek Area

- I am highly concerned with the overall loss of Green space and a vital ecological corridor. The EIS states that Burnt Bridge Creek is a vital ecological corridor providing a range of important habitats for a diversity of local flora and fauna". Yet despite this acknowledgement, it is predicted that natural water flow will reduce by up to 79% during the construction phase. This will not only have a devastating effect on local trees & wildlife but will also impact Manly/Queenscliff Lagoon & Beach which will suffer from significant increases in wastewater discharge from the Creek.
- The construction site is within 120 metres of the threatened Grey Headed Flying Fox Colony that will suffer disturbance from construction noise, destruction of a large number of trees (many of which they feed on a nightly basis) and access to clean water.
- Alarmingly the EIS does not acknowledge the existence of a local echidna population in the area – this is a major concern. A primary threat to echidnas is habitat loss, especially the loss of fallen logs, tree stumps, and protective understorey vegetation. As they move slowly they are also vulnerable to being hit by vehicles. Therefore any project of this scale must include plans to manage this vulnerable and protected species. I recently documented the existence of two echidna foraging along the bike trail to the south of the Flying Fox colony (January 2021). As it stands, the EIS makes no acknowledgment they exist at the site, therefore management of this species is not included in the relevant Biodiversity chapter to protect this population along Burnt Bridge Creek, nor to check burrows/nests for small offspring prior to and during the construction phase and once the project is completed, keeping them safe from moving vehicles.

2. Biodiversity Impacts – Seaforth and Manly Dam

- Loss of Trees, native Vegetation, insufficient replanting: This area covers a section of the Duffys Forest Ecological Community, with many endangered plant species and native bushland that sadly is near extinct due to land clearing and development. Removal of some 1979 mature trees in Garigal National Park, Bantry Bay and Manly Dam area will only be replaced through the planting of some 300 sapling trees.
- Water Quality Manly Dam Catchment Zone: There is significant risk of run off to creeks, riparian zones that flow to Manly Dam and Manly Lagoon during the construction phase.
- Significant disruption & displacement of Native Fauna: The EIS notes a high number of native and threatened species in the area, and that many will desert the area due to vibration and noise. This does not take into account less mobile fauna that (depending on the time of the year) have offspring in their nests/burrows and will be left to face destruction of their habitat.
- Overall environmental impacts not considered for all projects planned in this region. The long term & often incremental environmental impacts along this section of this

freeway have not been considered in association with the high rise housing redevelopment around Frenchs Forest that is being planned as a result of this project. Environmental & biodiversity impacts should be addressed from an area/regional perspective rather than an individual project perspective.

3. Traffic/Transport Impacts – Beaches Link

- The EIS relies on outdated traffic volumes (2016 data) and has not taken into account census data that indicates the majority of car trips on the Northern Beaches originate Dee Why and north nor impacts of COVID 19.
- Whilst the EIS considers impacts to very local intersections around Balgowlah, it does not appear to consider the regular traffic jams at major intersections at Condamine St/Pittwater Road in Manly Vale; Brookvale/Dee Why (Warringah Road, Pittwater Road – a known blackspot) and the intersection at Warringah Road/Frenchs Forest near the hospital. Unintended consequences from the tunnel build need to be addressed, particularly around incremental changes in local traffic areas to mitigate traffic issues around the construction site.
- The Tunnel Design prioritises the use of private cars and does not provide access for a dedicated bus lanes/staging areas or consider the increase in public transport patronage with the associated planned increase in population density along the Northern Beaches.

4. Human Health/Noise/Pollution Impacts.

- All concerns raised by the community regarding negative impacts related to noise, human health, pollution and traffic congestion are evident in the EIS. The mitigation processes, strategies and solutions are very light on detail and give no agency to residents living within the 4 zones of the construction phase to address these negative impacts as they arise.
- This project will deliver immediate & extremely negative outcomes for all residents in terms of noise, pollution and health impacts within a 1-2km radius of both tunnel exits/entrances and more broadly negative outcomes in terms of traffic jams/overdevelopment across the Northern Beaches.
- NO details on the actual Mitigation triggers or solutions to address Medium to high risk in Human Health Impacts to Local Residents during construction phase. EIS states that Zone 4 will experience Medium risk of dust settlement, human health and ecological impacts as a result of demolition activities and high risk related to as a result of earthworks, construction and track-out activities. Whilst EIS states there are standard mitigation strategies to manage dust impacts by project workers; there are no details on the actual process around communicating to residents on how they can mitigate and minimise dust settlement impacts on their homes, schools and day care centres. Will warnings be issued, or work stopped at a certain wind speed or direction for example?