

Submission  
No 429

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

**Name:** Mrs Katie Caban

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The Beaches Tunnel Link has greater potential for large scale damage to the environment than any of the other tunnel projects in Sydney. Most importantly, it would also severely threaten the air quality, and therefore the health, of those living, working and schooling around the ventilation stacks in Cammeray, Balgowlah and Seaforth. The following issues have not been adequately addressed

### **Loss of local amenities**

The wide scale damage to the environment will be seen at Flat Rock Gully is a green space that I love as do the residents of the surrounding suburbs. It is a peaceful non-manicured green space where people can enjoy recreational walks and runs, picnics or being lost in thought in a quiet healthy environment.

Flat Rock Gully acts as an environmental educational centre for nearby school children. Willoughby Girls High School has had a very close connection to this area as an informal educational site for many years as far back as 2000. It has provided students and teachers with valuable opportunities to investigate the local environment in many ways ... scientifically historically and creatively. This will be a huge loss to our schoolchildren.

### **Impact on flora fauna and the marine environment**

The loss of the flora and native animal habitat, including endangered species such as the Powerful Owl, and loss of the biodiversity that supports the habitat of this greenspace will be devastating environmentally. The present wildlife corridor will be cut endangering the creatures who live there. The bush in Tunks Park has good soil and high ascension plants which will be degraded when the health of the water flow is impacted because of the 117,000 Klitres of wastewater that will be flushed into Flat Rock Gully Creek each day and then into Long Bay with contamination likely in an area that is used by hundreds of people including schoolchildren every week. Marine species around Middle Harbour are at risk during construction and from the disruption of contaminated sediment.

### **Health concerns**

Flat Rock Gully with its history as a garbage tip is full of contaminated material. This contamination has not been properly assessed and it may be too dangerous to dig there because of the contamination. I am also deeply concerned as to how the deadly sandstone dust created by the dig will be safely stored initially and later when tunnelling starts? How will the community's health be safe-guarded. The dig will be near the area that is used for childrens' sporting activities throughout the year as well as being near the Willoughby Leisure Centre which is used by all ages to keep healthy and fit. Present good air quality will be negatively affected.

### **Vibration**

Proposed ameliorations are insufficient to protect geological and Indigenous cultural features from dangers identified in the EISs due to vibration. There are concerns about the adequacy of processes for accessing and responding to noise, vibration and other impacts on residents, during construction and operationally Processes for responding to threats to residents from contamination have shown themselves to be inadequate. Processes for responding to threats to residents from vibration have, from West Connex experience, also shown themselves to be inadequate. The lack of compliance with and enforcement of Conditions of Approval (COAs) applying to the WHT demonstrate that the processes aren't working.

### **Traffic congestion, truck movements and dangers to community**

Heavy large trucks accessing and leaving the site frequently onto a very busy undulating is very dangerous. Flat Rock Drive is used by commuters travelling to all parts of Sydney and is heavily used at the weekends for travel to and from the local sporting fields. Pedestrian traffic will be compromised both in safety and health because of the truck movements with contaminated soil.

### **Alternative options to the proposed project:**

The only alternatives considered in the WHT and BLT Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) were motorway tunnels in different alignments, and a cursory reference to public transport alternatives. Congestion pricing was not considered at all. Despite the environmental impacts, the contamination risks and the construction impacts, the EISs give no serious consideration to alternatives. The impact on air quality, as compared to the public transport alternatives, has not been considered.

the adequacy of the business case for the project, including the cost benefits ratio, (b) the adequacy of the consideration of alternative options, (c) the cost of the project, including the reasons for overruns, (d) the consideration of the governance and structure of the project including the use of a 'development partner' model, (e) the extent to which the project is meeting the original goals of the project, (f) the consultation methods and effectiveness, both with affected communities and stakeholders, (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, (h) whether the NSW Government should publish the base-case financial model and benefit cost ratio for the for the project and its component parts, (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, (j) the impact on the environment, including marine ecosystems,

### **The world is a different place than it was in 2016,**

The concept and design of the tunnel was first mooted in 2016 as a solution to a problem that is now unlikely to exist. It seems to me that a lot more discussion and re-thinking is needed before any definite decisions are made to go ahead with its construction.

The projects have proceeded on the basis that COVID-19 will have no impact on the traffic volumes on which the projects' benefits are predicated whereas evidence suggests that COVID-19 will lead to lower traffic volumes than those predicted. As opposed to the statement in the BLT EIS, the evidence suggests that COVID-19 is likely to result in lower traffic levels than predicted due to reduced population growth and a greater degree of working from home.

Finally, the cost benefits of this project is to be questioned especially when a business case has not been disclosed and other options have not been considered.

Yours sincerely

Katie Caban

