

Submission
No 432

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTERN HARBOUR TUNNEL AND BEACHES LINK

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I grew up on the Northern Beaches and have lived in Balgowlah, Seaforth, Manly Vale and Fairlight - all the areas set to be greatly affected by this tunnel. I travelled over the Spit Bridge every day to go to primary school and high school, and still travel across it now to get to the city for work. I am supposed to be one of the people to benefit from this tunnel and I am so angry, disappointed and really just so sad over the destruction that is about to occur in my home.

I lived in London for five years and did not need a car, instead I made use of London's excellent public transport system. This project actively encourages people to use their cars! Other countries are introducing congestion charges in their cities, and we are building more infrastructure to enable people to use their cars more often? Why? Who will be profiting from the tolls that are paid?

COVID has created a massive shift and we have moved to home based working, people have proved that they can work from home and many companies will work on a hybrid model for the foreseeable future, therefore people will only be travelling into the city 2 or 3 times per week. With less dependency on peak hour travel, the tunnel as a solution is a bit of overkill. It currently takes me about 20-30 mins from Manly Vale to travel to the city on the bus in the bus lane.

My understanding is that the tunnel will not have a bus lane and buses will not be able to access the tunnel. How is this a solution to our traffic woes? If people are forced to pay a toll the tunnel will not be utilised as it only cuts 6 or 7 mins off their journey - so everyone will still be driving on the same road - with the buses. The only people to benefit will be the few that pay the toll and use the tunnel. The tunnel is set to cost \$15 billion dollars. This money should be invested into improving public transport options (like in other major international cities) or investigating an alternative solution to upgrade the Spit Bridge.

I also understand that if the tunnel were to go ahead, the plan is to increase housing and population numbers on the beaches - more people = more cars - therefore more people using the roads/tunnel and in no time we are back to where we started with too much congestion and will need a new plan. Instead of encouraging more cars onto the roads, why hasn't a solution been thought of to increase public transport options and reduce people's reliance on their cars?

Environmental impact: I have listed a few of my concerns below

2,500 trees removed, threatened species such as the Eastern Pygmy-possums and grey-headed flying foxes will have their natural environment destroyed. The widening of the Wakehurst Parkway will require clearing significant areas of Manly Dam - I don't understand why this road needs to be widened? There is never any congestion along this spot. If it is required - why not extend the tunnel underneath the Wakehurst Parkway and save Manly Dam?

Lack of filtration in the ventilation/emission stacks - I have seen the maps of where the deadly pollution from the emissions stacks will spread and this is going to cause many ill affects to the health of the people living in the neighbouring areas for years to come

Dredging - this will damage the seagrass and the marine ecosystem and uncover toxic sediment polluting the waters - I regularly swim at Clontarf, the water is crystal clear my understanding is that this sediment will pollute the water and we will no longer be able to swim there.

Please consider other options to improve public transport which will have less environmental impact on the beautiful area we live in and call home. We cannot recreate what we have, we can only work to protect it and preserve it.