

Submission  
No 450

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 17 June 2021

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Partially  
Confidential

## Objection to the proposed Western Harbour Tunnel.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry. I note the terms of reference and make comment in relation to items b, g, j, l and m.

I am a resident of North Sydney, an area that would be impacted both by the building of a tunnel underneath us and additional vehicles exiting the tunnel into our local area.

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

Community consultation was inadequate. I attended two community displays of material relating to the proposed design and impacts of the tunnel. The events were promotional rather than consultative in nature. The staff were only there to answer questions on the one proposal and did not there to receive feedback. I had to request paper to provide my feedback and no one knew where to place it when returned. The forum was obviously expensive (lots of staff, computer animated display of traffic flow through North Sydney for example), and the level of investment reflected the aim to sell just one option to the community. There was no consideration of public transport alternatives.

### (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

There appear to be many factors decreasing future demand for cross harbour travel. It seems unlikely these have been considered in any meaningful way given the strong advocacy pro the tunnel and unwillingness to consider challenges to the cost benefit ratio pre-COVID.

- I note that the ABS found 41% of employed Australians were more likely to work from home one or more times a week than before COVID-19 restrictions (24%) and 44% of employed Australians have agreements that they can work flexible hours. 42% wanted the amount of work from home to stay the same and 14% want it to increase. (Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey February 2021).
- ABS data highlights a city exodus during COVID, with biggest internal migration loss on record. The number of Australians leaving greater capital city areas last year was greater than those moving from the regions to the city. The September quarter 2020 saw fewer arrivals into capital cities (-10.6pc) and more departures from big centres to non-capital city areas (+1.2pc). Sydney showed the biggest decrease in this period (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-02/abs-data-confirms-city-exodus-during-covid/13112868>)
- There appears to be an absence of broader 'future scoping'. For example an increase in the use of electric cars is forecast, and this would mean that over time, self-spacing of vehicles have the potential to increase road capacity by close to 100% thus reducing the need for major road upgrades.<sup>1</sup>

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

I am very concerned that the environmental impact responses to date minimised the significant concerns of the community about the project.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example <https://www.trafa.se/en/road-traffic/self-driving-cars---potential-development-and-impact-on-road-capacity-3583/> from Sweden.

in particular relating to:

- air quality as vents will allow exhaust fumes into an area dense with schools and community building. Pollution has known health impacts. I note that the NSW Chief Scientist commissioned a review of the Beaches Link EIS in relation to air quality and found the predictions made were not based on evidence.  
[https://committeefornorthsydney.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/210223\\_ACTAQ-OCSE-Beaches-Link-EIS-advice.pdf](https://committeefornorthsydney.org.au/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/210223_ACTAQ-OCSE-Beaches-Link-EIS-advice.pdf)
- the risk posed by raising toxic waste through dredging the harbour (“Immersed tube method”). Any waste will directly impact my family and friends as we kayak around Berry Bay and our dog swims in the harbour. I have been by the harbour and seen seals and even a whale in the past. This would all be at risk if the water is contaminated

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

The North Sydney community has experienced the impact of an infrastructure projects with the building of the Victoria Cross metro stations and metro tunnel from 2017 to date. This has included noise, vibration and dust as well as the problems of large trucks in small residential streets. We therefore understand what would be involved should the proposed tunnel be built. I am concerned that to date very few of the submissions made by residents and informed by lived experience have resulted in changes to proposals by the WHT project.

The operational proposal for the WHT off ramp into North Sydney would see increased numbers of fast moving vehicles funnelled into a small area that is also an education precinct. There are many children and young people walking to schools/university as well as the pedestrians exiting the metro and train station. To place a multilane highway alongside the main walking routes does not make sense, but the experience to date of highlighting concerns such as these has been inadequate and I have no confidence in the projects processes for addressing and resolving concerns going forward.

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

I am concerned by the loss of green space in Cammeray and at Flat Rock Gully . This will cause irreversible damage to wildlife habitat and limit active and passive leisure options in an area with increasing numbers of high density housing precincts.

Balls Head and Balls Head and Bay roads would be significantly impacted by increased traffic and the transport of excavated material. This is an important area of wildlife habitat and community amenity at the heritage listed Coal Loader and Waverton park.