

Submission
No 455

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I live in the western end of Brighton Street in Balgowlah. The street ends as a cull de sac and is adjacent the Balgowlah golf course. Wanganella Street cuts midway across Brighton Street.

Introduction;

There is a need for better transport to the city as Military Road is excessively congested during peak hours.

I object to having a tunnel for cars, trucks and busses as a solution. Recent science has shown that tunnels may work for a while, some say 2 years.

After a short period, and many billions of dollars later, the old bottlenecks occur and we are no better off. It encourages a move away from public transport and to more cars.

What we need is better public transport. That has occurred recently with the introduction of B line busses. Also, similar bus services are proposed for the route between Dee Why and Chatswood.

Long term, a cheaper and more effective means of public transport could be a rail system.

The Terms of reference:

(a) An adequate business Case including a cost benefit ratio.

(g) the extent to which changes in population growth, work and travel patterns due to Covid-19 have impacted on the original cost benefit ratio.

This business case for The Beaches Link has not been provided by the TfNSW as a separate stand alone project.

Current news indicates that the budget for the WestConnex was \$16.8billion. It has blown out to \$21billion. Elements were not included in the overall price and were required for WestConnex to achieve the objectives of the 2013 and 2015 business case. This typically may happen with the Beaches Link Project.

Justification for the tunnel based on a positive business case requires a review when considering the effect of Covid-19

(b) The adequacy of consideration of alternative options.

The only alternatives considered were road tunnels in different locations.

In May 2019 I attended a University of Melbourne Sydney alumni presentation titled Sydney's biggest urban infrastructure Challenges & Opportunities.'

I spoke to him after the presentation regarding the possibility of a rail link to the Northern Beaches. He advised he was instructed to ignore that as a possibility. Seems an odd idea when looking at feasibility options.

Other possible options could be:

A new spit bridge, public transport, rail and light rail designs.

Reducing the need to travel to the city by providing incentives for local business development.

Staggered starting and finishing times for worker as a means of reducing peak traffic congestion.

Spit bridge is also a problem as it is only 4 lanes of traffic and opens for boating causing long delays to traffic. For some reason little has been discussed about the possibility of constructing a higher 6 lane bridge.

The offer by Northern Beaches Council for the RtNSW to use the Balgowlah Golf Course for a link road and free space for construction is an unacceptable loss of green space.

(c) The cost of the project , including the reasons for overruns.

The cost/km of the Beaches Link Tunnel is the most expensive of any road tunnel in NSW and it costs more than a rail tunnel. There is a huge difference between the capacity to move people by car compared to trains.

Cost over runs will be 'a given' due to the engineering complexity of the project.

(d) The consideration of the governance and structure of the project including the use of a 'development partner' model.

It's not likely that the beaches link will generate enough traffic for the project to be funded from tolls in order to attract a development partner. It will need a multi billion dollar subsidy from the NSW Government tax payers.

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

The EIS travel time projections demonstrate that various intersections will experience delays. This is due to the impact of the tunnel outlets. These problems are left to the local council to fix.

Traffic will be excessive in summer due to large numbers of vehicles coming via the tunnel to the the local manly beaches from the Western areas. There is an expectation of some 30,000+ vehicles in the weekend.

Already Police have had to close some local beaches due to high number of visitors. There is an absence of parking facilities.

(f) The consultation methods and effectiveness, both with affected communities and stakeholders.

The RMS have gone about designing the tunnel with little local consultation. The first we heard about the tunnel was via 'Stone', a real estate agent. Not the best means of communication. We found out later that the RTA only advised pockets of people where the proposed tunnel would exit and where the awful ventilation stacks would be located.

Little consultation time was allowed to consider the designs after Covid and the virtual sessions proved a disaster. Requests to delay the process was refused.

Through the planning process the design was changed without consultation. E.g. the relocation of playing fields, the new exit location of the tunnel, the relocation of the ventilation stack etc.

Much work has been provided by local professional people in endeavouring to provide alternative design solutions to the RTA without success.

(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.

All details of the planning and design details, assumptions, business cases and cost benefit analysis should be released to give the community the confidence in the process. Particularly for alternative options and progressively as the design evolves. There should be no rush to get the job signed off before an election as seems to be the current case.

(j) The impact on the environment, including marine ecosystem.

The effect on the community is huge:

Loss of green space.

Loss of over 2500 trees without offsets.

Detrimental effect on ground water flows and Manly Lagoon.

Effect of dredging Middle Harbour and stirring up toxic sediment.

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

Due to our location there will be effects of noise, dust and traffic. Rat runs and pollution from the stacks when the tunnel opens. Little information is provided of protection from these effects.

Offers have been made to sound insulate the farthest side of Wanganella Street and not the near side to the project. Very strange.

It up to residents to police restrictions put on the contractors e.g. workers not to park in local streets.

(l) impact of the project on nearby public sites and related matters.

The loss of a well maintained public golf course and local trees on the course,

The current tunnel design has traffic lights at the entrance to the tunnel exit on the Burnt Bridge creek bypass. This may cause delays in the exit of traffic from the tunnel which is unacceptable. Polluted air is driven through the tunnel by traffic. No movement of traffic will cause a dangerous toxic build up.