

**Submission
No 436**

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

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The Hon. Daniel Mookhey MLC
Chair
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Submission to the Inquiry into the Impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link

Dear Members of the Public Works Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the inquiry regarding these projects. We **strongly object** to the Western Harbour Tunnel (including the Warringah Freeway Upgrade) and Beaches Link (including the Gore Hill extension) projects and urge you to recommend that the NSW Government abandon these plans immediately.

This submission is in 2 parts. Firstly, the immediate impacts on our family and our health and well-being. Secondly, the broader and long term environmental and health damage that the project will bring to our area, noting the relevance to your Terms of Reference.

Personal circumstances:

Our family lives in Dudley Street Balgowlah – mum and dad (aged 82 and 90) at number and the three of us at number . The whole of Dudley Street has been resumed by RMS, except our small group of townhouses at number (see map). During construction, we will have “front seats” to the mass destruction of our immediate surroundings - the complete, permanent mauling of Burnt Bridge Creek and the open space of the Balgowlah Golf course and oval. We will lose all of our privacy and amenity and be unable to use any of our outdoor/alfresco areas. Due to our proximity to the tunnel entrance 90m away (where my parents’ house currently stands), we will be subjected to at least 6 years (and probably more based on



Figure 6-38 Indicative layout – Balgowlah Golf Course construction support site (BL10)

precedents, including the 2 year over-run of the Northern Beaches Hospital and related infrastructure) of constant construction noise; plus, the noise and air pollution from the estimated daily 495 heavy truck movements and 1195 light vehicle movements; endless dust (with the prevailing wind in the area sweeping the dust south and straight onto our group of townhouses); light pollution from night works and visual pollution from the rape of our local landscape. We will have no respite from this hell, as our business is run from our home. Being subjected to this constant barrage and visual assault on the landscape, it is clear that there will be lasting health, including mental health and wellbeing, impacts on our family, in particular our daughter, who is asthmatic.

Family background:

We bought our home 22 years ago and immediately loved it because of its green aspect and views across a treed canopy and the open space of the golf course and oval, full of bird and wildlife, and wide ranging amenities – proximity to shopping centres; public transport; schools; leisure and recreation opportunities; bike paths and walking tracks; and the beaches - despite being near main roads. In fact, the real estate agent told us that it could never be built out!

When it was time for mum and dad to downsize from the house that they built and lived in for 50 years, we found them the perfect spot, just 6 houses down from us. It ticked every box for an aging but self-sufficient couple– flat entry and a downstairs bedroom and bathroom and a manageable yard – with a similar green space and aspect to the one they were leaving. This was to be their “forever home”. They have now enjoyed living in Dudley St for 11 years – down the road from their only child (daughter) and grandchild - and have built up a huge network of friends, support services, recreational activities, and more importantly, being able to effortlessly drop in on us, or vice versa.

Consultation Process (Terms of Reference (f)):

Dad opened the door, one morning, a few weeks before Christmas 2019, to an RMS representative handing out a glossy brochure with pretty pictures of the completed tunnel project, and the accompanying words of “we are acquiring your house”. No other details. He immediately rang us, in tears! Previous correspondence had outlined the project’s scope of works, mostly away from Dudley Street, and we have written confirmation from James Griffin (MP) that Dudley Street would not be affected by tunnel works. Our community at Dudley Street received no correspondence at all! Not even to inform us of what was proposed for the rest of the street or how it would affect us. Letters to relevant ministers have gone unanswered.

Construction Impacts (Terms of Reference (k)):

Our house is designed for alfresco living, with glass sliding doors on 2 sides. We rely on the northern sun for heating in winter and the sea breeze for cooling in summer; we use the sun and breeze to dry our clothes, choosing the environment instead of air-conditioning and a clothes dryer. With the construction of the tunnel, we will lose this ability due to construction noise, pollution and the constant dust - reported in the EIS as silica dust, a known cause of respiratory disease which will potentially exacerbate our daughter’s asthma and our hay-fever – we will not be able to use our outdoor areas or have our windows open. The EIS also reports that the construction noise will cause sleep disturbance, and daytime noise well above

human comfort. But Dudley Street residents have not been included in any sound mitigation planning, including double glazing, or respite, despite also having an access tunnel less than 10m from our back fence (see above map). Having a tunnel here is also a concern as we have underground car parks, with several of the townhouses built above. Constant vibrations from heavy equipment or trucks will cause irreparable damage to this structure.

With the destruction of our local environment, our “backyard”, we will lose all of the amenity that we hold as highly important to our way of life and the reasons why we chose this spot for our home – namely, the sounds of the diverse birdlife and cicadas; the varied wildlife that uses our yard (water dragons, brush tailed possums, ring-tailed possums, frogs, bats/flying foxes etc). These will be lost forever if there is no habitat for them. During construction, we will also lose the local bike and walking paths and access to safe cycle and pathways to many of our local destinations, having to use highly polluted main roads (with no bike path) and cross at major intersections highly populated with heavy vehicles and the induced traffic “rat-runs” on the backstreets, which is neither safe or relaxing. Access to Dudley Street, which already has an awkward, congested entrance, will be severely compromised.

Construction of the Seaforth and Balgowlah tunnels is to be done at the same time. Logistically, this will be a nightmare for all residents of Balgowlah, Balgowlah North, Balgowlah Heights and Seaforth and the local shopping villages. Our already parking-congested, narrow local streets will be lined with tunnel-workers’ personal vehicles and idling trucks and work vehicles, causing further pollution, and further traffic congestion and localised delays. The EIS has stated that, at times, the Wakehurst Parkway will be closed to all traffic. This is a real concern, particularly with elderly parents and an asthmatic daughter who has been hospitalised due to her condition, as the Northern Beaches Hospital access is via the Wakehurst Parkway, or a very long way around via subsequent detours on narrow congested roads.

Even after construction is completed, our family, and the other residents of our group of townhouses, will suffer a further, estimated 3 years of construction to complete the council’s proposed sports fields. That is over 10 years of our life in total chaos! We will be surrounded by 3 multi-lane roads and the constant noise and air pollution that will accompany them. We will have an 8 storey unfiltered smoke stack less than 300 meters away, that will not only be a visual eyesore and focal point on the landscape, and not following world’s best practice, pump concentrated pollutants for a 1.2km radius. The end-result will expose local residents and local school students to associated respiratory and health issues.

Dudley Street will be turned into a cul-de-sac to service 5 townhouses – surely this is not an economic use of funds. The Dudley Street/Sydney Rd intersection will become almost impossible to navigate, given its proximity to 2 major intersections, and therefore the access to our townhouses will become restricted and dangerous. The EIS has not addressed traffic flow into or around Dudley Street, or any of our local streets, during or after construction, and knowing the area, gives us no confidence in the planning process.

Keeping all of the above in mind, our position in Dudley Street is completely untenable. At present, we are unable to sell our house for suburb market value and if construction were to commence, the price would plummet. This is already evidenced by recent sales in our block (despite a boom market) – the sale prices being directly influenced by the proximity of the proposed tunnel. Consequently, we would be forced to move far away from our network of

friends, sporting and leisure groups, and work opportunities, as we are in an age bracket too close to retirement to consider a mortgage. This dilemma is further exacerbated by the uncertainty of where mum and dad can move to. Obviously, they want to stay close to us but at the same time they do not wish to be anywhere near the tunnel construction for health and well-being reasons.

Environmental Impacts (Terms of Reference (j) and (g)):

Environmentally, I simply cannot come to terms with a Government wanting to completely destroy any natural environment, let alone on such a grand scale, for very little benefit to the community and unrealistic time savings, causing more congestion on local roads - especially in light of Northern Beaches Council “Move - Northern Beaches Transport Strategy 2038” stating that they aim to reduce reliance on cars by 30%.

It has already been proven, and we have observed, that traffic across the Spit Bridge has consistently fallen since 2016; that 56% of Northern Beaches residents live and work locally; that the corridor of traffic from the Northern Beaches is greater going west towards Macquarie Park; the introduction of the B-Line buses has significantly reduced private vehicles driving to the CBD; and with the “new normal” of working from home, travel to the CBD is considerably less – none of which are addressed in the EIS. The Balgowlah tunnel exits at a set of traffic lights on the corner of Burnt Creek Deviation and Condamine Street. Currently, for 2 hours from 4pm, Condamine Street is congested with unmoving traffic (it often takes 30 minutes to travel only 4km). The tunnel planning does not address this issue and will only cause more cars to arrive at Balgowlah, faster, exacerbating this corridor.

The Beaches Link Tunnel will contribute significantly to our greenhouse gas emissions both during construction and through the increased number of cars using it (even if many are electric vehicles). The EIS states yearly operational emissions of 45.3 kt in 2027, then rising each year to 52.5 kt in 2037, which equates to one single road contributing 0.04% of the emissions of the entire state of NSW. Clearly, the project is not consistent with NSW greenhouse gas emissions reduction policy and Net Zero by 2050 goals to deal with climate change.

We are horrified to find, as written in the EIS, that our local aboriginal heritage and rock carvings will be damaged and possibly destroyed. Equivalent to 39 football fields of sensitive bushland at Garigal National Park and Manly Dam War Memorial Reserve – with highly endangered and extremely rare plant species, will be decimated – and that the 2000 mature trees, which are homes to many vital ecosystems, will be replaced by only 300 young saplings after construction. The green corridor will be destroyed and our native wildlife, including numerous threatened and endangered species, will lose access to food and water sources. Many of our native species are either nocturnal or diurnal and construction work, especially night work, will be detrimental to their physiology. This will continue after completion with the introduction of the lighting of Wakehurst Parkway – light pollution that will be seen from all surrounding suburbs. Land clearing of wildlife habitat is one of the key drivers of extinction, with a projected 9 out of 10 animals to be displaced from their habitats by 2050. The Beaches Tunnel project would be part of this catastrophe.

Added to this destruction will be the impact on our local waterways. Burnt Bridge Creek - supported by an environment levy paid to Manly Council, who called it “the life spring of

Manly” - will become less than a trickle and unable to support wildlife. Manly Dam, the only freshwater lake in NSW that is clean enough for swimming, will become contaminated by construction waste water and sediment runoff, which in turn will continue downstream to Manly Lagoon and out onto Queenscliff Beach, then travelling via the beaches rips to Cabbage Tree Bay (a protected marine sanctuary). This contamination will not miraculously stop after construction either, with the unfiltered smoke stack that will sit 25m higher than the ridgeline above Manly Dam and Bantry Bay.

We are also horrified that the Government can condone the polluting of Middle Harbour by dredging the harbour floor, filled with toxic contaminants, which will have devastating impacts on seagrass and aquatic life, including endangered species (such as White’s seahorse and the Little Penguins). The EIS acknowledges that the penguins will most probably be forced to leave the area permanently. These contaminants will spread to local beaches and harbour pools, enjoyed by both locals and visitors to our area.

Personal, Health and Well-being Impacts:

This whole tunnel project, thus far, from the first announcement, has been extremely stressful and wearing for our entire family, and escalated with the Dudley Street resumption. It needs to be emphasised that, when mum and dad voluntarily moved to Balgowlah, having to let go of treasured items and 50 years of memories, proved to be extremely stressful for them, leading to some major health issues. Having to move again, under these forced circumstances, may be catastrophic to their health. The personal grief at the thought of the devastating and wide-spread environmental destruction is immeasurable, causing high anxiety and emotional distress.

Conclusion:

From the outset, this environmentally disastrous project feels like it has been presented as a fait accompli, without any community consultation until after the pre-election public announcement, and without exploring more environmental-friendly and/or public transport options. In fact, with the recent permanent cancellation of many local bus routes, privatisation of northern beaches buses and the privatisation and selling off of the Manly ferries, it feels like northern beaches residents are being forced to use their cars, causing induced demand to prop up an unsound business plan, that in itself has not been made public.

This project will affect every aspect of our family’s life, health and well-being. Apart from the previously mentioned impacts around our home, street and immediate surrounds, it will impact where we do our recreation and leisure activities – kayaking in and around Manly harbour and foreshores; swimming at Clontarf and local harbour beaches; swimming and surfing at Manly Beach (member of Manly Life Saving Club); swimming in Cabbage Tree Bay; walking in our immediate local area and at Manly Dam; walking to supermarkets and shopping centres. It will also impact volunteer activities, being a member of a group that monitors Manly’s Little Penguin colony.

We are happy to have our name published and to discuss this submission further.

Yours Sincerely,

Philippa Cave and Paul Hayes