

Submission
No 479

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTERN HARBOUR TUNNEL AND BEACHES LINK

Organisation: Bay Precinct

Date Received: 18 June 2021



Quality of Life

Bay Precinct

Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Western Harbour & Beaches Link Tunnels

Bay Precinct is one of 23 Precincts in the North Sydney Council Local Government Area (LGA). The Precinct is in the suburb of Cammeray. About 950 residences are located within its boundaries.

This Precinct is opposed is the Western Harbour Tunnel (now proceeding) and Beaches Link Tunnel (decision pending). We have previously lodged objections to each project based on community objection to the heavy impact of the project to the LGA.

In this submission, we have selected some of the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Parliamentary Inquiry, and then have documented the concerns of our community related to that TOR.

TORs:

- *The adequacy of the business case for the project, including the cost benefits ratio.*
- *Whether the NSW Government should publish the base-case financial model and benefit cost ratio for the for the project and its component parts.*
- *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.*

Concern:

- The business case has not been released, so it is not possible to judge whether the benefits outweigh the considerable estimated cost of \$16.8 billion, or not. The NSW Auditor General has recently confirmed that a further \$4 billion of cost has been concealed. Total cost is now approaching \$21 billion. The public is entitled to know that these high-cost projects are delivering a return on the investment.

TOR: *The adequacy of the consideration of alternative options.*

Concern:

- Alternative “options” only considered motorway tunnels in different alignments - not alternative transport options. Health and safety risks associated with the construction and operation of the tunnel are higher than alternatives due the current alignment and proximity to so many schools.

TOR: *The consultation methods and effectiveness, both with affected communities and stakeholders.*

Concerns:

- Consultation documentation is full of misleading language and diagrams.
- Important information is not provided, including the Business Case and design options (alignments, portal positions).
- Consultation documentation uses misleading language and diagrams, for example:
 - “Freeway Upgrade” terminology used instead of “Motorway Expansion”.
 - Traffic modelling refers to “Do nothing & do something” rather than “without project & with project”.
- Environmental Impacts Assessment fails to present the impacts; for example, the Motorway facility sheds are only shown in distant views and camouflaged green.



TOR: *The impact on the environment, including marine ecosystems.*

Concerns:

- Flat Rock Creek Gully construction site (next to Willoughby Leisure Centre) will disturb an old rubbish tip, where toxic chemicals and asbestos have been dumped. Additionally, this toxic waste will be expelled into Flat Rock Creek, to Tunks Park, and into Middle Harbour.
- Heavy truck movements for tunnel excavation along Brook Street and Flat Rock Creek Drive.

TOR: *The extent to which changes in population growth, work, and travel patterns due to COVID pandemic have impacted the original cost benefit ratio.*

Concern

- **Traffic Impacts on Local Streets**

Heavier traffic in local streets will make crossing more difficult, especially for kids and the elderly in Cammeray, Neutral Bay and North Sydney.

“The intersection of Ben Boyd Road and Military Road would operate with longer delays as a result of the project due to changes to access and travel patterns at the Ernest Street and Falcon Street interchanges”. (p. 236 Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway Upgrade Technical working paper: Traffic and transport)

The calculus for the motorway developers has been that extra volume on the motorway system justifies heavier traffic on our local streets and villages. We must let them know that is not acceptable. The traffic report shows delays at intersections in the 2027 morning peak by comparing their performance without the tunnel and with the tunnel. The percentage indicates the **extra traffic delay** that results from the tunnels:

INTERSECTION	EXTRA DELAY
Amherst Street/West Street	+80%
Amherst Street/Miller Street	+81%
Miller Street/Ernest Street	+76%
Military Road/Ben Boyd Rd	+327%
Falcon Street/Merlin Street	+46%
Berry Street/Walker Street	+66%

Data source: WHT&WFU EIS p. 9-23 to 24

Extra delay in local streets means hassle for drivers and danger for people walking to school or the shops. Connecting motorways to busy local streets is *like trying to get a drink from a fire hose!* Our community is already living with a major motorway cutting through it. This project will enlarge the motorway and concentrate traffic at restricted entry points, encouraging ‘rat runs’.

TOR: *The impact on the environment, including marine ecosystems.*

Concern

- Loss of 2.8 hectares of community green space (equivalent to four soccer fields) in Cammeray Park which will become motorway sheds and exhaust pumping station. An aerial photo follows showing the considerable area of Cammeray Park affected. The lost green space is outlined in purple. Transport NSW ignored requests during the consultation period to mark out the area of parkland lost or erect height poles to indicate the position and scale of the proposed sheds.



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The two images below are M5 Motorway facilities similar to those which will occupy Cammeray Park

