

**Submission
No 496**

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

Name: Ms Carolyn Allen

Date Received: 18 June 2021

Mr Daniel Mookhey MLC

Chair, Inquiry into the impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link

Parliament House

Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Mookhey

I have resided in the Balmain Peninsula for over 50 years and am going to comment on the impact to my community and as a citizen who has been active in local government and in the community for many years but who has no professional scientific or engineering expertise. I have responded to the EIS & read the Submissions Report as well as the Notice of Decision through the eyes of someone who swims regularly at the Dawn Fraser Baths & whose grandchildren sail in this waterway.

I object to the expansion of the road network and encouraging the use of private vehicles rather than planning for the future of the planet & providing public transport. Apart from objecting to the need for this infrastructure project, there are many areas of concern. I am going to respond only briefly to some of the Terms of Reference, as my response here is to concentrate on my objection to the use of Immersed Tube Tunnels and the issues relating to the excavation of toxic sediments and their disposal.

(a) Adequacy of the business case

The business case for the proposed project is completely inadequate as there is no assessment of costs to the environment during construction and public health in the long term nor of the benefits lost had more public transport be provided or alternatives invested in. There is actually no evidence that a cost benefit analysis has been conducted.

Surely a cost benefit analysis needs to be done of all options?

A new business case is required taking into consideration the changes in populations growth & work arising from Covid-19.(g)

(b) The adequacy of the consideration of alternative options.

The future in transport is in public systems and a tunnel bored under the harbour for public transport would have far fewer opposing it, but as it is a motor way & the surface is considerably more elevated on the Northern side, we on the South side have to suffer substantial environmental impacts due to the chosen construction method for what is not a long term solution.

There is only a very cursory examination of alternative routes available in the documents available. NO evidence is given of costs & effects on the environment of the alternatives.

In relation to alternative construction methods NO alternative to Immersed Tube Tunnel is examined. I feel this method was chosen as least cost & that the effects of disturbing harbour floor sediments are merely glossed over.

(d) and (i) I absolutely object to the use of the so called 'developer partner' model if it is to follow the example of the WestConnex project where there has been absolutely NO transparency. There have been blow-outs in costs which the tax payers are kept in ignorance of and guaranteed very long profit periods for the corporate 'partners' at the cost of the tax paying public.

I also object as the model currently used (in WestConnex) means that residents whose properties are affected are not adequately reimbursed for damages or their need to relocate within their community & local councils are not adequately compensated.

(f) the consultation methods and effectiveness, for both affected communities and stakeholders. All residents (communities) in the impacted area stakeholders.

I attended several official sessions regarding the EIS. The volume of the documents was necessarily overwhelming and whilst the people who were there to answer questions were personable, the responses were cursory & hard copies were not available. The representatives were ill equipped to answer questions raised. As a result it was completely ineffective. Many in my community have expended considerable time (and emotional trauma) in reading and trying to understand what are very technical and complicated documents. We spent hours doing responses. I felt that The Submissions Report merely glossed over most comments and just re-asserted what was in the EIS. The Submission to the EIS by the EPA, a body which citizens should have respect for was minimal. They should have recommended a new EIS which properly addressed the SARS.

(g) and (h)

See my response to (a) as changes in the economy and the increasing effects of climate change do mean that a new & business case and cost benefit analysis needs to be done both for the stages of such a project but also for looking at all alternatives – including NOT having another harbour crossing.

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

The EIS did not adequately address the SEARS in relation to sediments. Whilst it says that the project '*will be constructed within acceptable levels of impact*' there is no discussion of what is 'acceptable'. It says that they should detail how '*likely impacts will be minimalised*'. In the EIS, it basically says that 'deep silt curtains' would be preferred, but they have decided that shallow silt curtains are ok! Deep silt curtains would surely 'minimalise' impacts so should be required?

The documents say there will be no effect on the Dawn Fraser Baths however you can see the figures (in Ch17 EIS) showing sediment deposition at different times it certainly does extend to White Horse Point as well as into Snails Bay, & around to White Bay according. This will clearly have an adverse effect on marine life and public health. The EIS points out that swimming will need cease at Greenwich Baths for a period so recognises this.

The Submissions Report virtually ignored this. The EPA in its very limited response to the EIS said further sampling was required.

We then have some further sampling (Golder-Douglas, 2017) however this has a very limited scope. The Submissions report talks of a revised location & alignment of the Immersed Tunnel Tubes. *We need to know why this was required. We certainly need full assessment of the changes and a greater volume of samples taken to adequately assess the contamination resulting from this proposed construction method.*

The “Notice of Decision” (Sec 2.22) again gives no real responses to the issues of dredging. In The Recommended Conditions/Response (p6) What do the following mean?

** Limiting suspended sediment and turbidity impacts in Sydney Harbour during dredging activities*

**Requiring construction activities in Sydney Harbour to be undertaken in a manner that protects nearby intertidal rocky reefs, seagrass beds and other sensitive marine habitats.*

Neither of these proposed responses or ‘conditions’ inspire any confidence that anything will actually be done. How this is to be done and conditions imposed need to be clearly documented and the public needs to be informed regularly throughout the construction period of all sampling & results.

(k) adequacy of processes for assessing & responding to noise , vibration & other impacts on residents

The experience of the residents impacted by the WestConnex project need to be fully examined through consultation and documented and we should learn from these experience if we are to subject others to it. In the case of WestConnex the procedures for residents to monitor/ report have been inadequate. These residents & communities will be making great sacrifices for this unnecessary project.

(l) Impact on Dawn Fraser Baths – discussed in (j)

In summary, if the residents (& tax payers) of the Balmain Peninsula are to have this unnecessary project imposed on us, the safest and least environmentally damaging construction method should be chosen, and every possible action taken to protect the waters & marine environment. It has taken many years of action to clean the Harbour & river to the extent that we have and this is no time to destroy it.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Allen

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