

**Submission
No 507**

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

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

Please note:- I have read the Submissions by the Save Manly Dam Catchment Committee, Baringa Bush Residents' Group Seaforth and the Balgowlah Residents Group and I agree and endorse their contents.

I am deeply concerned at the level and number of failures in transparent proper processes incorporating due diligence throughout the above planned project. Therefore I thank the Committee for calling this Inquiry. There has been little if any effort to encourage public participation with most residents learning what is happening from each other and mostly after the event. I hope and trust the work of this Committee will shine a light into the many dark corners of this project.

TRAFFIC:

The assumptions upon which the EIS is based do not take into account the current and post-COVID world. Just one simple example. Residents experience peak-hour journeys to the city from Balgowlah and Fairlight respectively of between 30 and 35 minutes. How then can the stated modelling forecast that by 2037 drivers will save 30 minutes to drive to the city from Brookvale or Balgowlah be credible? Particularly as post-COVID living is increasingly 'online'. Claims that the Link Tunnel is needed to alleviate traffic congestion at the Spit Bridge between the northern beaches and the city are therefore unfounded.

Especially alarming if not plain risible is Chapter Four of the EIS which equates more buses with more congestion. I believe bus drivers have been telling many passengers the NSW government is cutting and minimising services here as part of plans to privatise what remains of the public transport Bus System. The government's own publicity lauding the introduction of the B-Line bus system has been widely endorsed by Northern Beaches residents who have confirmed they will return to public transport generally once they are confident they no longer need to fear COVID-19. Indeed there have been extensive peak-hour B-Line queues for some time. Global evidence, research and history all show more not less public transport is the key to growing successful,

welcoming and lively cities. The proposed Beaches Link tunnel has no public transport access despite the plan for six lanes not four as in other Sydney tunnels.

The Beaches Link Tunnel is clearly aimed at minimising public transport options and maximising individual transportation by car and truck.

Of Course! That maximises the planned tolls which in turn will increase inexorably each year.

To achieve profitable privatisation? We have already seen government crack-downs using heavy fines on traffic seeking to avoid a new tunnel with high cost tolls by the use of 'Rat Runs'. These rat-runs have become a nightmare for residents across Sydney pushing congestion into narrow suburban streets and many such streets have already been identified by residents along the Northern Beaches.

It is also a problem for the NSW Government desperate to recoup massive cost-overruns via road and tunnel tolls.

There appears to be no Business Plan for this Project. Unsurprising. There appears to be an unending river of money now for hapless future generations and governments to find later.

Also unsurprising is the absence of science-based evidence to support the EIS. This ranges from permanent environmental damage and destruction of irreplaceable habitat for rare and endangered native fauna and flora to claims Mosman and Cremorne will benefit from less traffic along Military Road. I believe the lack of scientifically based evidence demonstrates this Beaches Link Tunnel has been clearly and totally politically driven.

I also believe more than one sitting MP has privately expressed concern they will lose their seats if this Project proceeds. To the best of my knowledge they are not disliked but they believe voters will 'punish' them for this project in its present form being undertaken by their Party. We already see signs that management of the COVID crisis no longer produces the political popularity it once did. Life-changing impacts from this EIS will more than fill that space.

Ask why have transport alternative options to the Beaches Link Tunnel not been considered? The holes in the fabric are large and ragged. You can see through this. The EIS in its present form must be rejected, withdrawn and ALL transport options for the Northern Beaches area be properly examined. This must take into account the new realities of a post-COVID world, saving what we have left of the native fauna and flora identified in current and previous submissions.

No more pretence about Offsets, Mitigations and false benefits.

I note the inevitable massive cost over-runs, significant traffic congestion from the time construction begins which becomes worse upon completion with congestion simply being moved to more 'pinch-points' along Wakehurst Parkway in each direction. **Moving and exacerbating traffic congestion does not end it.**

The determination to site Stacks as currently planned has created serious Health Concerns for children and teachers at the three nearby schools in the Balgowlah area and 'life and death' fears for any seriously ill patients seeking transport along Wakehurst Parkway to Northern Beaches Hospital during aspects of the Stack construction at the Parkway.

Proper consideration of ALL transport options for the Northern Beaches taking into account advice

and views of end-users (ie. Residents and Community Groups and representatives) would result in far better outcomes for present and future generations.

I ask that this Inquiry reject the EIS in its present form. Failure to support multiple claims and assumptions with up-to-date science-based evidence riddles this document. The only reasonable conclusion is that this EIS does not and cannot be relied on in whole or in part.

Yours sincerely

Diane Willman