

Submission
No 509

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

June 17, 2021

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey MLC
Chair
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<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2767#tab-submissions>

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 an inquiry regarding these troubling and alarming projects. I 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.

First, a little about me. My name is _____, and I absolutely love Willoughby because it is so wonderfully green and covered in nature, that is the sole reason I live here, city life is hectic and retreating to Willoughby after a day in the hustle and bustle keep me centred and balanced. I was an avid user of public transport until recently when the NSW Government removed most of the buses I used, now I walk or ride more and still try to leave the car at home as much as possible. I was delighted to see how many people discovered areas like Flat Rock Gully during Covid lockdowns, it proved how much people need nature as much as we need to take care of it. Clearly I love nature and Australia's flora and fauna are simply amazing, it has a right to be here as much as we do, but unfortunately too many stakeholders in the Government and their donors treat it as if it's in the way and prefer to ruin in it and the proof is the extinction rate of native animals in Australia especially NSW is at an all time record high, a record we should not be proud of, yet the current Government seem to be hellbent on doing irreparable damage to areas like Flat Rock Gully that house over 14 endangered animal species and ruin water sanctuary for marine life and humans. All of this wreck-less destruction just to build another road/tunnel – that will only encourage more driving, to cause more congestion, to add more tolls? There is not public transport options and it will destroy too much more of our dwindling environment, it makes no logical sense at all. The cost of the project is unjustifiable, there is no innovation, no sustainable or renewable technology being used, it's like they are building for the needs of city in 1952 not 2021.

I strongly, wholeheartedly, morally and ethically object to the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection.

My reasons are further outlined in relation to the Committee's Terms of Reference.

I have previously submitted a detailed submission as to why I object to these projects. Please find attached this submission and cross reference to your terms below:

(a) the adequacy of the business case for the project, including the cost benefits ratio,

No business case has been released to the public. Reported cost at the time of printing is \$14-\$15 Billion for both projects. There has been no transparency over West Connex, and the Light Rail was a blow out, neither of these projects have benefited the community. The light rail takes twice as long as the now removed buses did, how is any of this justifiable and have the needs of the communities in mind?

(b) the adequacy of the consideration of alternative options,

Alternative options have not been comprehensively scoped or compared to a toll road tunnel option. The option to address congestion via a dedicated mass transit solution ie) light rail, metro or rail has not been adequately considered, surely cars are NOT the future of city travel, it seems Sydney is always 40 years behind the rest of the world when it comes to innovative solutions, 1 person per car vs the thousands that can community in a properly run public transport system, this is what the future generations want, as per bullet point 22 in my EIS Submission.

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

As per point 13 in my EIS Submission This project costs just as much as an overseas tunnel which links countries that are far longer, yet this tunnel is only 15kms long, so basically \$1 billion but kilometre. We could use that on an extensive metro system, or a fast train to regional areas.

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

As per point 14 in my EIS Submission.

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

As per points 19, 20 & 21 in my EIS Submission.

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

My questions regarding the 14 + endangered species were continually ignored and the generic answer was "the public can choose how to revegetate the areas" you cannot replant endangered species, it's very worrying the people in-charge don't seem to care or acknowledge how many animals will actually die and even become extinct. The design changes were made following the EIS submission process as stated in a Transport for NSW update.

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

As per point 32 in my EIS Submission

(h) whether the NSW Government should publish the base-case financial model and benefit cost ratio for the for the project and its component parts,

As per point 13 in my EIS Submission.

(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,

The has been lack of transparency and truth in the EIS Submission, in-fact it does not mention anywhere the environmental impacts of areas such as Flat Rock Gully and the impacts on destroying the homes over 14 endangered species including the Powerful Owl, as per point 4 & 5 of my EIS Submission.

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

As per points 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. & 10 in my EIS Submission. There also many sensitive areas including Sydney Harbour, Balls Head/ Berry's Bay and the Coal Loader, Cammeray Green Spaces, Middle Harbour, Flat Rock Gully, Balgowlah Golf Course, Wakehurst Parkway and Manly Dam. Environmental impacts include marine life, heavy tree losses, contamination risks, air quality, biodiversity offsets and an overall increase in emissions. The Western Harbour and Beaches Link tunnels will produce more emissions than the Southwest Metro (approx. same distance) before adding cars. Lighting, emergency systems, ventilation fans and the concrete itself (larger than metro/ rail tunnels) all contributes to a higher emissions profile.

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

As per point 8. In my EIS Submission.

(l) the impact of the project on nearby public sites, including Yurulbin Point and Dawn Fraser Baths, and This project is simply unimaginable, the wreckless abuse of our irreplaceable environment at far too many amazing areas of Sydney. Yurulbin Point and Balls Head (Aboriginal and Natural Heritage), Berry's Bay (large construction platform 5 years), White Bay (location of toxic sludge drying out), Coal Loader (tunnel goes straight under), St Leonard's Park (loss of green space, loss of heritage - first planned park on Nth Shore, contamination concerns, dust and noise), Cammeray Golf Course (loss of space and heavy construction for 7 years, interruption of water supply/ dam for local parks, double unfiltered stack adjacent will be permanent), Flat Rock Gully Dive Site (Aboriginal heritage, contaminated tip area, major water catchment area and flood zone, dive site competes with massive sewage tunnel, loss of trees, feeds out to Tunks and Middle Harbour, Powerful Owls and other species impacted), Middle Harbour and Spit Reserve (contamination 4.5-5 years noisy works, marine life esp breeding grounds interrupted, Northbridge Baths), Clive Park (significant Aboriginal and Natural Heritage), Balgowlah Golf Course (loss of green space and stacks), Wakehurst Parkway (thousands of trees lost and biodiversity concerns), Burnt Bridge Creek (near elimination of water flow permanent – feeds out to Lagoon) and Manly Dam (sensitive endangered species environment, fresh water, feeds out to ocean, run off huge concern with loss of tree buffer to road). As per points 6. 7. 8. 9. & 10 in my EIS Submission.

(m) any other related matter.

As per points 1. 2. 3. 11. 12. 17. 18. 23. This project is simply not building a future city, all it's doing is destroying the parts of Sydney that are incredible and the reasons people live here. The destruction of these areas are extremely disturbing and upsetting. All infrastructure projects going forward should simply have to comply with smart, intelligent, ethical and moral planning that is sustainable, community and environmentally friendly. We have the modern smarts to do this, but we are lead by backwards thinkers who don't seem to invest in future thinking planners or listen to what the tax payers actually need, which is better public transport that doesn't destroying what's left of our environment.

I would like to have my name suppressed.

Yours Sincerely,

I object the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection.

For the following reasons:

1. This project is an environmental disaster that will cause irreparable damage to the environment for an unnecessary and already outdated tunnel that has no scope for public transport options.
2. With all the technology and all of the smarts we have in 2021, we should ONLY be building infrastructure that is innovative, sustainable and works with nature NOT against it. These 3 key points should be a mandate to all future infrastructure planning and development.
3. Sydney should be a city that is a leader of innovative and sustainable infrastructure, yet we are still stuck in the mindset of planning a city for what people needed and how people travelled around in the 1970's.
1. The EIS is incomplete, it is missing vital studies of all bushland including Flat Rocky Gully, there is NO mention of the multiple endangered species such as the Powerful Owl, 3 x bat species & the Grey-headed Flying Fox, plus the other 14 threatened species that will all lose their homes and habitats in this area.
2. The EIS fails to mention that there will be removal of the old growth and threatened flora species.
3. The dive site in Flat Rock Gully must be moved to an already cleared and or developed area, there are plenty of them around, it is absurd that this was even a consideration.
4. Surely an area that does not require so much sandstone to be dug out would make much more common sense.
5. There is no impact study on the cause and effect on the survival of the native species with significant, vegetation loss, no shelter and no food. The stress they suffer from noise and vibrations, no study on native species ability to breed under stressful conditions. What will happen to all of the insects, reptiles, mammals and birds? These species make up our ecological system without them we suffer too!!! It has been scientifically proven over and over again animals have emotions and yet they have not even been considered within the EIS?
6. Mental health - Flat Rock Gully saved thousands during COVID when thousands of people, many families more discovered this peaceful and tranquil area. It has always been a refuge for locals to escape the hustle and bustle. John Barilaro stated on Monday January 04, 2021 "You have to think about people's mental health, the desire to get out there and have aspects of a normal life, recreational aspects, sport, they all give us a sense of wellbeing. Reports come to my desk on the very sad outcomes when people's mental health suffers. We'll strike the balance." My personal mental health is suffering severely over this project and the thought more bushland will be destroyed, more flora and fauna will die, the waterways will be dredged which will also kill sea creatures and sea plants – and us humans lose out on my green space and the quality of the water we drink and swim in will be jeopardised. I do not sleep well, I feel stressed and upset all of the time. What a massive contradiction stating that sport is good for our mental health while you are ruthlessly destroying our amazing nature areas.
7. After the emotional scarring that millions of Australian's are still dealing with after the 2019/2020 bushfires, we lost millions of hectares of vegetation and millions of native animals, we cannot continue to clear land and knowingly destroy over 3000 trees and native species for a vehicle tunnel. This has the potential to completely wipe out endangered native animals, or add more to the list of threatened and endangered list – hasn't NSW already caused the extinction rates to be the highest we have ever had in the last 5 years? It is a human's job to protect our wonderful bushland and animals, not treat them as though they are in the way.
8. This is lazy, cheap, immoral, unethical planning.

9. Sydney's Public Spaces campaign, currently there is a campaign lead by the NSW Government. It states "They are our streets, public facilities and open spaces. Public spaces are all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive". - United Nations. This campaign is another total contradiction when this project will cause long-term destruction to Flat Rock Gully, Manly Dam, Middle Harbour, Sydney Harbour etc etc.
10. This project costs just as much as an overseas tunnel which links countries that are far longer, yet this tunnel is only 15kms long, so basically \$1 billion but kilometre. We could use that on an extensive metro system, or a fast train to regional areas.
11. The tunnel is only going to cause huge congestion at the Sydney Harbour Tunnel. Three tunnels into one another underwater has never been attempted anywhere in the world, this sounds extremely risky and dangerous, there will too much weight and pressure when vehicles are stopped for hours on end when there is crash or break down in one of the tunnels.
12. Increased Pollution from open ventilation stacks is very worrying. The West Connex had 6 air pollution exceedance within the first weeks of opening, during COVID when it rarely had any traffic.
13. Toxic chemicals dredged from the water will mean the water is unusable for years and years on end.
14. Asbestos and other toxic chemical will be dug up at Flat Rock Gully.
15. Paris Climate Agreement – the points above prove this project is not aligned to this agreement which Australia has signed up to therefore it cannot and should not go ahead.
16. Traffic congestion Brooke Street, Naremburn and Willoughby Road, Willoughby are already over traffic capacity, diverting and adding thousands of trucks is for over 5 years is completely unpractical and very dangerous.
17. Trucks carrying tonnes of sandstone will struggle driving up the steep ascents of Flat Rock Gully Reserve meaning they will be driving very slow, using lots of diesel to make it up the steep ascents, plus causing more danger to cars travelling around in and around them and pedestrians trying to cross the limited crossings within these areas.
18. These suburbs have no access to this new tunnel, yet they are going to be used and abused for years to come to benefit wealthier areas.
19. • The target demographic of people who use their cars all of the time are Baby Boomers as it was a 'status symbol', Millennials however are far more environmentally conscious and would rather use public transport, car-share, cycling and walking. The Baby Boomer generation will be mainly retired in 12-15 years when this tunnel is completed, and it will not meet the needs of the next generations.
20. Electric and self-drive vehicles, car-share, Ubers, trains, light rail, cycling and walking are the future of transport, therefore less house-holds will require ownership of their own car.
21. Sydney-siders want and need better access to public transport.
22. I will never use the M8 due to the horrific destruction of the environment and the 800+ plus houses that were destroyed, plus the on-going air quality issues this road has. If the Northern Beaches Link project goes ahead and causes the proposed destruction of the environment, I refuse to use it.
23. The only people who will benefit from this tunnel are people who are to profit from toll roads who clearly have a complete disregard and lack of empathy to the damage it will cause.
24. Sydney-siders would rather the previously proposed Metro project to the Northern Beaches, are far better modern solution that can transport thousands vs 1 person per car in hours of gridlock.
25. Sydney-siders want the NSW Government to protect what's left of our bushlands.
26. You can replant trees, but you CANNOT replant insects, reptiles, mammals, birds and marine life, once they are gone it's forever.
27. Sydney-siders want viable sustainable and innovative transport options.
28. If a tunnel must go in, then it needs to be done in a way that does not do so much irreparable damage to the environment as we are already in a Climate emergency.

29. COVID-19 has changed the way everybody works, studies have shown many people will not be returning to offices, the studies and research in this EIS project are extremely outdated and do not factor in modern 2021 and beyond.
30. Modern cities do not need more roads, modern cities require innovative and sustainable public transport systems, updates to existing roads or running tunnels under them makes more common sense.

I strongly, wholeheartedly, morally and ethically object to the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway Connection.

Thank you for your time,

References:

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