

**Submission
No 512**

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

Name: Mrs Danielle Moore

Date Received: 17 June 2021

Parliamentary enquiry into Beaches Tunnel

I am writing to strongly object to the proposed Northern Beaches Tunnel . I have considered the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) results and am seriously concerned about a number of aspects of the construction, the long term effects on our local environment, loss of amenity and poor business case.

I have lived in the Manly region throughout my life. My family has grown up in this area enjoying and utilising the many natural assets. Each week throughout the year we enjoy walking or swimming at the local beaches such as Clontarf or Queenscliff, cycling or bushwalking at Manly Dam or along the Burnt Creek cycle path. The risk of losing these beautiful natural areas due to construction or its secondary pollution is criminal.

The proposed tunnel does not serve our community of Balgowlah- Seaforth , it will divide our neighbourhood with large roadways and cause rat runs for those trying to either access or avoid it. The EIS reported long traffic delays to residents from our area trying to access the Spit Bridge and Wakehurst Parkway during the 7 plus years of construction with trucks and heavy machinery blocking intersections and roadways. Local roadways will become gridlocked. Ironically, the EIS proposes that traffic congestion will worsen after only two years of the tunnel opening.

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Like most local families my family work in the city centre and travel by bus from Balgowlah. The Beaches Tunnel does not provide a direct link to the city, vehicles will exit at North Sydney causing massive bottlenecks in an already highly congested area. What percentage of workers from the Northern Beaches travel to Rozelle and further South requiring a Western Harbour Tunnel ?

Since the impact of COVID and working from home, the government bus routes have been significantly altered in our area , many have been removed . Commuters are forced to travel to a Seaforth hub by car or bus and wait for a connecting city bus. The loss and inconvenience of services appears to be a ploy to force more commuters onto our roads, building a business case for the tunnel. Despite this measure, peak hour traffic has not reached pre-Covid levels .

Despite calls for dedicated bus lanes in the tunnel by council and James Griffin , this has been ruled as unfeasible for toll operators due to the lack of financial return. Tunnel users would be tolled at rates estimated at \$13 per trip, highly unpalatable for daily commuters.

I work at St Leonard's which is poorly supplied with efficient bus transportation, making a commute of 80-90 minutes with two buses. I therefore choose to drive, which used to take 40-50 minutes. Since COVID and work from home practices this time has been halved , currently taking 25 minutes at 8 am. Traffic has not returned to pre-Covid levels as many have changed work practices permanently.

My weekly travel is centred around Manly, Mosman, Cremorne and Neutral Bay. I attend the gym and shop in Mosman most days, I regularly go to the movies in Cremorne and eat in the restaurants in all of those areas. None of which requires the use of a tunnel to access.

There does not seem to be any gain from this proposal , only losses . Loss of our precious natural environment, loss of community spaces, loss of amenity, loss of untolled roads.

The Beaches tunnel project is an example of an un-examined political announcement and I urge the enquiry to note in relation to items of the Terms of Reference that:

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

- The project did not include a cost benefit analysis which was publicly available.
- Did not include stand-alone cost benefit analysis for the two tunnel projects separately.
- A project of this size will certainly contain extraordinary cost blow-outs which will be paid for by taxpayers across the state and by we the residents in perpetuity.
- Does not include traffic mitigation plans throughout the duration of the build. The cost to business of the traffic problems the build will create has not been addressed.
- The Beaches tunnel has been used politically by the Liberal Party to shore up votes. Mosman voters want Northern Beaches traffic off their streets and into a tunnel. The cost-benefit ratio of votes seems to be the most important factor.

(b) the adequacy of the consideration of alternative options

- The terms of reference for the tunnel proposal excluded consideration of public transport options and options for better linking residents to public transport.
- The introduction of the Bline has proven highly successful in the Northern Beaches and should be extended further up the Beaches, past Mona Vale, to enhance public transportation . In addition, a Bline to Chatswood and Macquarie would enable links to rail and University access , reducing car reliance for western travel.
- Extending the Bline model would be much cheaper, faster to implement and adaptive to passenger requirements than a Tunnel taking 7 plus years and costing \$12 plus billion to build.
- An alternative proposal made to the Viable Transport Options group and Zali Steggall MP by Vic Petersen was an interesting design for a Metro tunnel linking Chatswood rail hub to

Seaforth, Manly Vale , Manly with extension options up the beaches. It appears to be a simplified design not requiring the same expenditure or decimation of the environment.

Providing an efficient public transportation system that links into the existing network makes better sense than encouraging further car reliance .

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

I have attended in-person and Zoom consultation sessions throughout the consultation period. The community consultation has been inadequate - an example was the initial in-person consultation pre-COVID where the engineers present did not understand the typical traffic movement in the area of Balgowlah-Seaforth and when attempts were made to explain this the information was dismissed.

Subsequent consultation via Zoom also ignored local information about traffic flows. In particular, it was emphasised by Transport NSW that traffic volumes have returned to pre-covid levels – this is patently untrue as all of us who commute daily can attest. This was raised in the last Zoom consultation by multiple members of the community and was ignored. There has been no monitoring or assessment of where drivers actually travel - there has been an assumption that all traffic goes to the city – which ignores the local movement entirely.

(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

- The project Is based on an assumption that those crossing Spit Bridge do so only to access the CBD and ignores the multitude of other locations within our locale.

- The tunnel access and egress are poorly planned at the site of Manly Vale/Balgowlah such that it simply moves the bottle neck and has been designed with no knowledge of local traffic movements.

- Traffic assessment was conducted prior to COVID and has not accounted for the changes to Work From Home (WFH) changes which are likely to persist ,despite TfNSW considering these impacts to be temporary. However, McKinsey Global Institute stated in early 2020 that changes to work that had been predicted to pan out over the next five years were delivered in 60 days. (Baig, A. et al (2020) The COVID-19 recovery plan will be digital: A plan for the first 90 days).

- Independent assessment of traffic movement on the beaches by Dr Michelle Zeibots has shown approx. 44% of residents move East to West. The remainder is evenly split between local traffic and those who cross the Spit bridge (but don't necessarily travel to the city) such as myself . Her recommendation for traffic relieving infrastructure for the Beaches was to improve East to West public transport and could be achieved at far less cost than the proposed tunnel. This was supported by the Beaches Council but rejected by the current State government.

- In the most recent TfNSW Zoom consultation, it was suggested that travel time from Balgowlah to the CBD would be reduced by 38 minutes by 2037. This is ridiculous given that even in peak times now I can travel from Balgowlah Heights to St Leonards in 25 minutes. What is this estimate based on?

- There are no measurable goals which indicate that travel times will actually be improved. Closures of local roads to force people into the tunnel will increase congestion - not relieve it.

The EIS indicates that travel times will be increased due to changes at other major intersections such as along Warringah Freeway and Military Road.

- The EIS states increased traffic congestion will occur particularly on weekends – with nowhere for the additional vehicles to travel to and park.

(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

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- Does not include traffic mitigation plans throughout the duration of the build. The cost to business of the traffic problems the build will create has not been addressed.

(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 base case financial model and benefit cost ratio should be published for transparency and discussion of the value of such an expensive project. The government should not be able to hide what could be considered pork barreling attempts. In addition, due consideration and further consultation needs to be given without rushing approval through prior to the upcoming election.

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

-The EIS outlined many disturbing aspects of construction regarding our local environment including air quality , loss of tree canopy, destruction of bush land ,stream and marine pollution. The impact on natural ecosystems and habitat is immense.

-The fragile ecosystems of Manly Dam are under threat by the widening of the Wakehurst Parkway to six lanes . With spoil and wastewater polluting the dam and its environs.

-Queenscliff Lagoon will have nearly half a million litres of water pumped into it daily , contaminating the lagoon and beaches. Queenscliff Beach is in close proximity to Cabbage Tree Bay Marine Reserve with its highly valued and protected marine environment. It's loss due to pollution would be a travesty.

-Burnt Creek water flow will be reduced by 96% by the completion of the tunnel, destroying a treasured community space.

-High contamination risk has been cited for heavy metals and oregano toxins into Middle Harbour from tunnel dredging , polluting The Spit, Clontarf swimming area and other local harbour beaches.

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

-Traffic mitigation and management during the build is inadequate. The EIS cites 2.5 trucks per minute onto Sydney Rd and Wakehurst Parkway sites – such volume will bring traffic on the beaches to a standstill and all this with our public bus routes having recently been decimated and which are now unworkable.

-The high truck volume poses a significant risk to students at Balgowlah Boys High and to all motorists along the Spit and Wakehurst Parkway.

-There has been little to no information about how traffic will be managed throughout our area over the period of the build, nor information about how people who live in the suburbs of Balgowlah Heights, Clontarf, Seaforth and Balgowlah will be able to move about our suburbs and to Mosman once the tunnel is built. We frequently travel to Mosman to shop, dine and see movies and understand there will be significant restrictions to accessing these suburbs including the removal of the right-hand turn from Military Road onto Ourimbah Rd. This will have implications for the businesses of Mosman and Cremorne.

-An unfiltered exhaust stack in close proximity to numerous houses and local schools and childcare centres will have significant health implications. While similar stacks are in use in NSW, they do not match international standards. Nowhere in the world is a tunnel of the proposed length of this one serviced by a single unfiltered stack. Yes, pollution will be reduced along the entire road length but that is no consolation for those under the stack.

-Additionally, when it was decided to move the air stack from Dudley Street to next to Balgowlah Boys high school, the air quality was not re-assessed – figures are based on the Dudley St readings.

-Access: I will not be able to access the tunnel for my commute as it would require me to drive north from Balgowlah Heights, through Balgowlah and into Manly Vale negotiating heavy traffic to access the portal at ManlyVale. Once in the tunnel it will not take me to my workplace in St Leonards. However, travelling along Military Road won't be an option due to the closure of Ourimbah Road in the East and Ernest St in the West. Crossing Warringah Freeway at Falcon St to access Crows Nest and on to St Leonards will be impossible.

-Permanent reduction in amenity: The tunnel proposal does not include assessment of the very significant reduction of amenity to those around the build (this includes people living alongside the build and all the surrounding suburbs) throughout the duration of the build and once completed. Residents of the main suburbs around the build (Balgowlah, Balgowlah Heights, Balgowlah North and Seaforth) will become 'locked' in our suburb once completed, due to poor access to the tunnel and compromised ability to move around our suburbs. This is true especially with consideration of the many of us who move between the beaches and Mosman/Cremorne/Crow's Nest, or between and through these suburbs to travel East or North to Brookvale, Manly Vale and Curl Curl etc.

-The extended construction phase (7 plus years) will have a massive impact on local residents. Estimates of 3000 workers engaged 24/7 on a site in a valley surrounded by residences. In anticipation of the detrimental impact of the project regarding lack of parking, traffic congestion, noise and air pollution, apartments and homes in the vicinity of the Golf Course and proposed access roads of Seaforth and Balgowlah have already flooded the real estate market as residents escape the area.

(1) the impact of the project on nearby public sites

-The Manly Dam and War Memorial Park bushland is a rich oasis of flora and fauna, some extremely rare, vulnerable species such as the Heath Monitor (Rosenbergs Goanna) and the Climbing Galaxias Fish.

Construction on the Wakehurst Parkway section of the Tunnel project risks polluting the site with spoil and waste water and altering groundwater through excavation.

-In addition, aboriginal heritage sites exist in the War Memorial Park bushland requiring protection for future generations.

Like most local families my family work in the city centre and travel by bus from Balgowlah. The Beaches Tunnel does not provide a direct link to the city, vehicles will exit at North Sydney causing massive bottlenecks in an already highly congested area. What percentage of workers from the Northern Beaches travel to Rozelle and further South requiring a Western Harbour Tunnel ?

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