

**Submission
No 515**

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

Name: Ms Rebecca and Mark Newtown Power

Date Received: 18 June 2021

Friday 18 June 2021

The Hon. Daniel MOOKHEY, MLC
Chair, Public Works Committee
NSW Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Mookhey,

Submission to the Inquiry into the impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. I am a member of the local community, live very close to the proposed site and unfiltered ventilation stack and I object to the proposed Beaches Link tunnel. We are a family of two parents with three sons who will all attend Balgowlah Boys' High School spanning the years 2022-2036. For these years my children will be living and schooling in the same very small geographical area and will be unable to escape the impacts of this project.

More specifically I have the following concerns related to this inquiry:

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

I am not aware that any other alternatives to a road tunnel for private cars was ever considered. We the community were presented with the tunnel out of the blue. I have still not been informed of the 'problem' the tunnel is designed to 'solve' and my husband and I have commuted to the city daily on public transport from Manly and Balgowlah for the past 25 years without problem.

I would welcome an assessment of public transport in the area and a greater emphasis on public transport in any proposed 'solutions'. For example, it is difficult and dangerous to cycle to the city from Balgowlah, especially on the Spit Bridge approach – perhaps a dedicated cycle lane from Manly Vale to the city could be considered? Perhaps dedicated school buses would reduce the high number of private school children being driven to school on this road?

At the very least, a dedicated bus lane needs to be included in the tunnel. The glossy marketing brochures included a yellow B-Line style bus in the tunnel pictures yet there is no firm commitment to include a bus lane at all in the tunnel. This was misleading information distributed widely amongst the community and has led to much misinformation from those that would otherwise not support such a proposal.

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

As stated above I am still not sure what the original goals of the project are or whether they would even still be valid in the post-COVID work environment. Reducing travel times has been mentioned but without looking at all alternatives such as public transport and cycling it is impossible to know whether the goals of the project will be met.

It is also unclear to me how or why this tunnel is linked to the Western Harbour Tunnel. It is confusing and misleading to continue to link the two projects and I am unsure why the Beaches Link cannot be assessed separately.

Furthermore, I noted in the EIS that travel times at various intersections feeding into the tunnel will actually increase as congestion is pushed further back onto Forest Way / Warringah Road and local traffic around Bunnings and Freedom at Balgowlah as more traffic from further north is pushed through Balgowlah and North Balgowlah.

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

There has been some consultation with the community, and I have attended a meeting held at Balgowlah RSL and also the online meetings in 2020. However, the consultation has always only been about the tunnel proposal and there has been no opportunity for input on any other solution, and furthermore no background information provided on what problem the tunnel is purporting to solve. There is information available on what is proposed but not much information on why it is being proposed. And information on the negative impacts was buried deep within the EIS making it difficult for residents to access. For example, despite attending all the official consultations and online meetings it was not until I read the EIS that I realised my property would be negatively impacted by light pollution with enormous floodlights installed to operate 24 hours a day less than 100 metres from my bedroom window for years on end. This was never mentioned in any consultation. So, after reading the EIS I now realise the negative impacts will be dust, noise, smoke, parking issues and traffic congestion, possibly vibrations and also blaring light pollution all night every night for several years. And in this environment my children are expected to live and study successfully through to Year 12 without ever escaping as it goes on 24 hours a day, seven days a week adjacent to both their home and school. Unfortunately there are no other public high school alternatives that could be considered as this is our local school and I am told all the catchment zones are now shut - ironically we moved to Balgowlah to be closer to the school and now cannot even leave as houses in this pocket of Balgowlah are currently un-sellable due to uncertainty over the tunnel.

(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 I mentioned above my husband and I both work in the CBD and have commuted on public transport for decades. The journey has been much faster since COVID with so many people choosing to remain working from home. I cannot understand how the travel time can be reduced by 38 minutes when the trip has rarely ever taken this long even in the worst pre-COVID peak hour. The CBD work environment has changed and if they continue to rely on out-dated and incorrect travel times to justify the project then the entire basis for proceeding is flawed.

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

Just in our own backyard alone there are a lot of bandicoots, water dragons, frogs and flying foxes going overhead. I think most of these originate from the Burnt Bridge Creek area and I'm not sure what will happen to all these animals once their habitat is gone? Where are the flying foxes going to go? They are not the best neighbours and if the noise and loss of water forces them to relocate their colony I am quite sure there will be many complaints wherever they go. Where are the water

dragons going to go? Additionally, the land clearing proposed for the Manly Dam Memorial Park is alarming as it is very valuable to have such a pristine natural area so close to the CBD. Reducing this asset bit by bit over the years highlights a lack of commitment from the state government to natural space and habitats. Ironically the two bodies of water most impacted – Manly Dam and Clontarf – are both used by my son for board training with Queenscliff Nippers.

Furthermore, what impact will there be on Queenscliff Beach? Queenscliff Lagoon is already too polluted for swimming and needs more water flowing through it – from my understanding this project will decrease the flow of water through Burnt Bridge Creek and Queenscliff Lagoon to the beach. Surely this will negatively impact the water quality at Queenscliff Lagoon and Beach even further? Beach closures due to poor water quality are often ignored by surfers and swimmers – will we return to the days of ear infections etc after swimming at Queenscliff like we had in the early 1990's? Queenscliff Surf Club have also recently secured the 2021 State Nippers Championships – perhaps the water will be too polluted to host future events?

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

RMS have stated that some homeowners will be compensated for negative impacts, and some might be able to access noise mitigation measures such as double glazing etc however I still do not know whether this will be offered to me or when I could expect to receive any such information. They have just said they will contact the affected residents in due course, but this lack of basic information makes it difficult for our family to plan our future. A personalised approach to work with each resident or street individually would be beneficial. As it stands we simply do not know what the process will be during construction or operationally as we have not been informed.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues.

Kind regards

Rebecca Power and Mark Newton