

Submission
No 526

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

Name: Mr John Berry

Date Received: 18 June 2021

Dear Committee Members

Submission - Impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link

Thank you for giving me and other citizens the opportunity to comment on the Western Harbour (WHT) and Beaches Link (BLT) tunnel projects.

My name is John Berry and I am a resident of Cammeray. I strongly object to these projects for the reasons outlined below. I also object because the government's reasons for proceeding with the BLT were based on a hurriedly formed election promise at the last state election when it perceived that the seats of Manly and North Sydney were under threat and not on a rational plan for the transport needs of northern Sydney.

The government is proposing to spend tens of billions of taxpayer's dollars on Sydney toll road tunnels which transport experts tell us will ultimately worsen congestion due to induced demand.

Regional NSW infrastructure, including health and transport, is in dire need of a funding and this is where the funding should be directed.

My submission and objections addresses the following Terms of Reference –

WESTERN HARBOUR TUNNEL AND WARRINGAH FREEWAY UPGRADE

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

Air Pollution from Unfiltered Emissions from the WHT

I strongly object to the WHT & Warringah Freeway Upgrade (WFU) because –

1) North Sydney would receive the full discharge from the Western Harbour Tunnel via a single emission stack, located in Anzac Park, close to Anzac Park Public School, in Cammeray.

1) The proposed tunnel is too long for the type of ventilation proposed and does not use International Best Practice in the design of the filtration system.

2) The proposed longitudinal ventilation is known to be substandard in controlling in-tunnel vehicle emissions for tunnels longer than 4km. For example, Tunnel pollution levels of the M5 tunnel beyond the airport have been a major concern for years. Filtration is now being trialled.

3) The EIS fails to take into account known problems and in particular ignores the recommendations on filtration for new Tunnels made by the 2018 Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into WestConnex.

4) Pollution levels in the EIS have been underestimated due to the non-adoption by Australia of Euro6 fuel standards upon which the modelling is based upon. Modelling in the EIS has shown that all suburbs in the North Sydney LGA would have increased air pollution levels, yet many already exceed the Australian standard.

5) The unfiltered ventilation stack would not allow hazardous vehicle emissions to dissipate, partly because of nearby tall buildings, and they would instead largely settle over the surrounding suburbs exposing residents to toxic and carcinogenic emissions. Large numbers of residents would be affected by this dangerous pollution because the Nth Sydney LGA has a very high population density of 6,207 people per square km.

6) The lack of stack filtration is a known hazard to human health. The World Health Organisation has declared that outdoor pollution is a leading environmental cause of cancer deaths. The NSW government states - "Air pollution is a persistent concern in the capital cities of Australia. Continued exposure to high levels of common air pollutants such as ozone (O₃), oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), carbon monoxide (CO) and particulate matter (PM) can result in serious health impacts, including premature death and cardiovascular and 3 respiratory diseases. Those particularly susceptible are the very young, the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions." <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Air/airpollution-economics-health-costs-greater-sydney-metropolitan-region-050623.pdf>

7) There is a lack of planning to manage the unintended consequences of noise and dust during the very long construction phase of 5 to 6 years.

I request that the committee recommend that:

- full air filtration of all ventilation stacks be carried out to provide the best possible protection to human health in line with International Best Practice;
- ventilation stack machinery be placed underground;
- a dedicated underground bus loop to service railway stations in the North Sydney LGA be constructed;
- International Best Practice filtration techniques be employed because of the long length of the tunnel and the predicted heavy traffic volumes, particularly trucks and diesel vehicles;
- transverse treated particulate filtration through tunnels (not just at the end in the stacks) be installed;
- the use of truck convoys during the construction phase be employed so that individual streets could be opened (and closed) at reasonably predictable and nominated times, enabling local residents to plan accordingly AND
- shuttle bus transport to work sites and designated on-site parking for workers be provided so that local businesses and residents would not lose access to their onstreet parking.

(1)the impact of the project on nearby public sites, including Yurulbin Point and Dawn Fraser Baths, and

Permanent Loss of Green Space at public sites

I object to the permanent removal of 2.6 hectares of Public Recreation Green Space at the Cammeray Golf Course/ Cammeray Park for the widening of the freeway and to house two permanent industrial sheds. The North Sydney LGA already bears the distinction of having one of the highest numbers of people per head of hectare of public open space in the greater Sydney region. The population of the North Sydney LGA is increasing. It is incumbent on the state government and its agencies to meet the green space needs of both existing and future generations in order to make this project sustainable. The lack of green space in the Nth Syd LGA has been identified by the local council as a growing problem particularly in relation to sporting groups. The Cammeray Golf Course is public green space, which under Crown Land Management Act 2016, has been vested to the local council to be used as a public reserve. The destruction of this public green space and the construction of industrial sheds would flout the intention of the act and the principles of Crown Land Management – (a) that environmental protection principles be observed in relation to the management and administration of Crown land, and (b) that the natural resources of Crown land (including water, soil, flora, fauna and scenic quality) be conserved wherever possible, and (c) that public use and enjoyment of appropriate Crown land be encouraged. Two prominent examples of Crown Land in Sydney are Hyde Park and Bondi Beach. If it were proposed that a significant part of these two public spaces were to be used for the construction of a motor way the public would rightly be outraged.

The public will be outraged at the proposal to use public green space in Cammeray for a motor way.

I request that the committee recommend that there be no net loss of green space as a result of the project; • that to compensate for loss of public green space in Cammeray park that land bridges be built for parkland (exceeding 2.6 hectares) across the freeway from Cammeray Park to Anzac Park, and from Anzac Park to St Leonards Park, as a facility for pedestrians, cyclists and recreation; and • that the industrial sheds be built underground, utilising the natural fall of the land from Ernest Street through Cammeray Park. Industrial sheds of this nature are routinely placed underground in major road projects overseas e.g. Hong Kong.

(m)any other related matter

Traffic Problems and Pedestrian Safety

The North Sydney CBD and the North Sydney LGA would be negatively and permanently impacted by the proposed project in terms of pedestrian safety and road traffic congestion. Pedestrian Safety I object to the project because North Sydney Council has dedicated many years and millions of dollars towards making the North Sydney CBD more pedestrian friendly and this project would create a traffic scar through the heart of the CBD in Berry St and undo much of the council's good work. The North Sydney LGA has the highest concentration of schools in Australia and many of these schools are located within the CBD. The proposal to funnel more cars onto North Sydney streets reduces pedestrian amenity and would compromise the safety of students and workers. The project would hinder access to public transport, including the new Victoria Cross Metro Station, and discourage sustainable transport choices.⁴ Road Traffic Congestion Construction Phase – I object to the large volume of 24/7 heavy truck movements through the Lower North Shore, particularly in the Cammeray and North Sydney areas for a very long period of 5 to 6 years. Many of these noisy truck movements would be during the sensitive night-time hours and would disrupt the sleep of residents. The NSW Department of Environment states that – "Chronic sleep disturbance is harmful to both physical and mental health...". The emissions from the many diesel truck movements through the local area would be significant. Diesel is a Class 1 carcinogen and a high risk to human health. Operational Phase I strongly object to the WHT and WFU EIS because the significant increase in traffic congestion on major roads and local streets which would result from the project. The EIS shows that the performance of many key intersections along the Pacific Highway, Miller Street and Military Road would be downgraded to the lowest rating possible, being an 'F' rating, meaning that traffic flow could not be any worse at peak hours, for example – Miller St and Falcon St intersection Miller St and Berry St intersection Miller St and Ernest St Miller St and Amherst St Pacific Highway and Bay Rd Pacific Highway and Berry St Military Rd and Ben Boyd Rd Suggested Mitigation Measures – Undertake an urgent review of the proposed traffic system flows detailed in the North Sydney Area, particularly streets like The Pacific Hwy, Miller St, Berry St, Falcon St and Ernest St. Investigate alternative options to funnel traffic into the tunnel, other than through Berry St North Sydney eg funnel traffic into the tunnel from The Pacific Highway, where it intersects with Arthur Street and High Street in North Sydney. There should be no loss of local traffic connectivity within North Sydney, such as the existing Berry Street to Miller Street or the Berry Street to Falcon Street eastbound and westbound connections.⁵ Construction Phase – 1) During the construction phase implement truck convoys so that individual streets can be opened (and closed) at reasonably predictable and nominated times, enabling local residents to plan accordingly. 2) Provide shuttle bus transport to work sites and designated off-site parking for

workers so that local businesses/ residents do not lose access to their on-street parking. Operational Phase - 1) Create dedicated bus lanes in Blue and Miller Streets in order to facilitate the flow of public transport. 2) Ensure that pedestrian access and amenity is improved in the streets of North Sydney and not made worse, as proposed in the EIS, such as short crossings at intersections which would keep parked cars in the streets to separate traffic from footpaths. Ensure the planned re-introduction of two-way traffic flow in Berry Street. 3) Create land bridges across the Freeway to facilitate 'green grid connectivity' and new walking paths, cycle ways, sports fields and parklands. 4) Construct a steady-angle cycle-way from Falcon St/Military Rd to Milson's Point.

Sustainability

I object to the WHT and WFU because the project does not meet the definition of sustainability in the EIS - "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The project fails to meet this definition because it is a massive road project which encourages the least sustainable and least efficient form of people transport ie the motor vehicle. I also object to the EIS because –

- 1) It has failed to consider and weigh up the sustainability benefits of public transport options as an alternative.
- 2) It has not considered and taken into account the NSW State Government's commitment to an objective of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050" and the Commonwealth Government's Paris Agreement target of a 26-28% reduction in greenhouse gases below 2005 levels by 2030. The WHT & WFU would not work towards achieving these goals and commitments and would impede the government from achieving them and is therefore unsustainable.⁶
- 3) The EIS has failed to demonstrate that it meets the needs of current and future generations because - Over the long term this project would lead to increased traffic because of induced demand and any benefits to traffic congestion would be short term, particularly in light of a fast growing population in Sydney. The project would expose current and future citizens to hazardous levels of vehicle emissions from a long road tunnel utilising unfiltered emission stacks. A planning document prepared for the NSW government in 2017 explored the risks of breaching air safety and said that: "The dispersal of pollution is hindered by tall apartment buildings less than 20 metres away." Background pollution in North Sydney is also elevated by nearby freeways, and the report says the project may cause "cumulative air quality impacts". The project would decrease green space for present and future generations contrary to NSW state government vision and policy. Sydney has an increasing population and requires more, not less, green space. The project would conflict with the policies and visions of the NSW State Government, the NSW Department of Planning and the Greater Sydney Commission as well as the State Government's Greener Places" vision and policy – eg The NSW Department of Planning: "Our programs are focused on delivering two important Premier's Priorities that will help make NSW a more resilient and liveable place: Provide greater access to quality, green, open and public spaces closer to homes. Increasing the tree canopy by planting one million trees in Greater Sydney by 2022."

I request that the committee recommend

- 1) Sustainable public transport options be considered as an alternative to the toll road tunnel project.

BEACHES LINK TUNNEL

Air Quality

The problem - Particulate Matter as a result of vehicle emissions is already higher than what is recommended or considered “safe”, particularly in suburbs surrounding the Warringah Freeway.

We are already living in an environment where levels of PM2.5 and PM10 is above the level of what is considered safe and the EIS demonstrates that this will continue well past the tunnel opening. The government has a duty of care to do what it can to reduce these levels now that it has monitored and confirmed the issue. Transport for NSW’s conclusion that the air quality across the area on average will not be substantially worse is predicated on the assertion that surface level traffic will reduce. This assertion is contradicted many times in the EIS however via data which demonstrates increased intersection delays, the potential of additional toll avoidance, slower bus times, intersection failures, the admission that rat running will be required to access changed access arrangements to the freeway, an increased proportion of trucks through the area and several other factors. Regardless of surface level changes modelling shows that pollution is redistributed as a result of the project. Some key corridors receive less pollution ie) Military Rd but sensitive receivers such as schools and sports fields receive more. Children are particularly susceptible to the health impacts of pollution and so this redistribution is unacceptable. The Western Harbour and Beaches Link program of works cuts through the largest school corridor in Sydney with 500-1000 pupils at approx. 262 schools. The precautionary principle must be applied to ensure the health of children across the project footprint.

I request that the committee recommend that alternatives to a major toll road should be examined, such as public transport. Filtration of emission stacks should be made a condition of consent. Pre and post construction monitoring of air pollution should occur at all sensitive sites.

Biodiversity

To preserve and protect our native wildlife, Willoughby Council has designated Flat Rock Gully (FRG) as Zone E2 Environmental Conservation – Wildlife Protection Area. FRG has been designated a WPA because it provides essential habitat for many of the native animals found in Willoughby. Flat Rock Gully Reserve is one such area as it provides significant habitats that support a wide range of birds - particularly small birds - mammals, reptiles and frogs that are disappearing from our urban areas. This WPA which the community has formally set aside for environmental protection should not be destroyed or disturbed. To do so undermines the value of these designations of high biodiversity and leaves all protected areas open to destruction. Below the proposed FRG dive site is an old and heavily contaminated dump site. The project would risk releasing heavily contaminated material and water into the environment which would be a risk to both human and wildlife health. Artificial lighting and construction noise from the proposed dive site at FRG, according to the scientific literature, would be harmful to the native wildlife which inhabit or pass through the bushland. The impact would be most felt by threatened species. The NSW government is responsible for the protection of native wildlife. Wildlife Corridors Flat Rock Gully Reserve is also a key part of the network of wildlife corridors across Sydney required to maintain biodiversity. It is a major and central component of the east-west wildlife corridor between Middle Harbour and Lane Cove River Catchments. Bushland in Flat 3 Rock Gully contributes to habitat linkages that include Tunks Park, Middle Harbour,

Northbridge Park, Cliff Ave Reserve, Bicentennial Reserve and Artarmon Reserve. This wildlife corridor has been in place for many decades and is important to the wellbeing of wildlife across several catchments. These corridors provide shelter, food and protection from predators and allow the movement of birds, animals and insects and the continuation of viable wildlife populations. They support biodiversity by allowing wildlife to respond to environmental variables such as access to water, food abundance or scarcity, population changes and the access to breeding partners which maintains genetic diversity in a healthy, local population. Many threatened and endangered native species owe their survival to these wildlife corridors. The importance of wildlife corridors was most recently emphasised in the draft Design Guidelines released by the NSW Architect in association with the Department of Planning. The Guidelines advocate for the incorporation of a goal to protect, conserve and connect urban wildlife habitat in all relevant NSW legislation, policies, strategies, plans, and programs.

I request that the committee recommend that the revised EIS be expanded to take into consideration the impact the construction site/s would have on local and regional wildlife corridor. That the revised EIS assesses the impacts of destroying bushland which has been designated by the community and local government as a Wildlife Protection Area and set aside for Environmental Conservation. That the revised EIS consider using already cleared areas, such as the Baseball Diamond adjacent to Flat Rock Drive in Bicentennial Reserve, rather than destroy a Wildlife Protection Area. That the revised EIS include a full testing of the chemicals in FRG and complete a new risk assessment based on this information. That the revised EIS include detailed plans to prevent contamination from the tip material or from accidental oil or chemical spills. The emergency remedial action to be taken if such contamination occurs should also be delineated. These matters are required to be assessed as part of the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs).

Contamination

I object to the high levels of contaminants which would be released into the environment and would pose a risk to human health and to wildlife. Contaminated materials from the exposed tip site at Flat Rock Gully and/or accidental oil or chemical spills could be washed by stormwater or wastewater discharges into nearby waterways with serious consequences to plant life, wildlife and the Long Bay catchment. Contaminants have been found in groundwater and surface water around the tip site in Flat Rock Gully and there is a risk identified that these may move down the gully as work proceeds and endanger human and wild life health. Large amounts of wastewater would be produced from both construction and operational activities. Wastewater would be treated and flushed down creeks for example 117,000 L per day will be released down Flat Rock Creek via Tunks Park and 296, 000 L down Willoughby Creek from the Cammeray Site via Primrose Park. Specific methods regarding how the water will be treated given the contaminants detected and listed as likely ie) asbestos is not clear.

I request that the committee recommend that the revised EIS include a full testing of the chemicals in FRG and complete a new risk assessment based on this information. That the revised EIS include detailed plans to prevent contamination from the tip material or from accidental oil or chemical spills. The emergency remedial action to be taken if such contamination occurs should also be delineated.

Loss of Green Space

I object to the proposed use of important bushland at Flat Rock Gully as a dive site. This bushland site is an important recreational area for the local community and became even more so during the covid era. As population in the Willoughby LGA will increase over the coming decades we have a responsibility to preserve and expand existing recreational and bushland green spaces. The proposal to permanently remove or 26,000m² of public recreation space in Cammeray Park (Cammeray Golf Course) and utilizing this land as the site for two substantial industrial sheds to house the Motorway Control Centre would be justifiably opposed by the community. Urban consolidation is occurring in the Nth Sydney LGA and as a result the population is increasing. The net result of the BLT project should be an increase in available green space not a decrease.

I request that the committee recommend that the tunnel project should be altered to improve and increase green space both in terms of the total useable area and its ability to serve the variety of objectives set out in Greener Places. One example would be to construct a green bridge across the freeway linking Cammeray Park and Anzac Park. The opportunity exists to improve the connectivity of green space in North Sydney. This would align with the NSW State Government initiative for the Green – Blue Grid. Conditions of approval There should be an increase in the total area of useable green space in North Sydney as a result of the project. Changes to the green space in North Sydney that result from the project should be better connected and of a higher quality than would be the case without the project. A design investigation should be undertaken to discover the best option to meet the conditions above.

(m)any other related matter

Traffic

The Problem- Objections

During Construction the traffic burden placed on residents, school children and motorists in Northbridge, Willoughby, Artarmon, Crows Nest, Cammeray, Naremburn, the lower north shore during the estimated 5 years of the construction of the Beaches Link with the cumulative impact of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway Upgrade extending construction time across the area for upwards of 8 years.

1. A large number of additional construction vehicle movements will be required across the project servicing multiple construction sites. These sites are in and around schools, sporting fields and school transport corridors which increases the safety risk. Heavy/ Light
2. 900 additional vehicle movements will be required on Flat Rock Drive/ Brook St daily. This is a narrow local road which services the connection from Northbridge via Naremburn to the city. Dozens of schools on the Lower and Upper North Shore use this route as their school bus route. Brook St is also a significant active transport link from Willoughby to North Shore 7 schools esp Cammeray due to zoning. Keeping kids safe along this corridor will be a challenge. Residents within the many dead end streets along this corridor exiting onto Brook St will also face a higher risk.
3. There is only vague assertions that the thousands of workers (employment of 15,000 has been quoted to service the Western Harbour Tunnel, Warringah Freeway and Beaches Link) will use

public transport to access sites. Insufficient parking is provided onsite and not all sites are easily accessible by public transport. The Balgowlah site is a major launching platform for staff who will work at the sites and be bused down to the Spit via Spit Rd.

4. Whilst buses are used from Balgowlah the thousands of workers need to get there and may need to use Military Rd to do so.

5. Marshalling areas will be needed for trucks across all sites but particularly at the Flat Rock site. Marshalling should not be permitted on local streets and particularly not in the Naremburn Conservation Area due to the increased vibration risk. Trucks should not be allowed to idle while marshalling and every load should be tested and inspected to ensure contaminants are fully contained.

6. Trucks accelerating up a steep hill from zero is likely to create a substantial amount of diesel pollution - the health impacts of this have not been fully assessed. An alert style monitor should be placed at bicentennial reserve to alert the community to high levels of pollutants.

7. The noise assessment claimed that the trucks on Flat Rock Drive would not create more noise however the assessment does not appear to account for braking on a very steep hill - the noise assessment should be redone.

8. Spoil will be taken out from the Cammeray site across the bridge to an unknown location. On return the trucks will need to turn around at an undisclosed point - this may add more trucks to roads around Willoughby than currently documented in the EIS.

9. Active transport routes across the route will be fragmented by the project and travel times will increase at Flat Rock, Cammeray and Artarmon.

Operation 1. The EIS confirms the Beaches Link is a Toll Road but there are no costings as yet. Costing and placement of toll gantries is essential to modelling traffic flows and predicting toll avoidance. Toll avoidance could become an issue as per the Inner West - tolling strategy yet to be confirmed however all other contracts have been 40-50 years with min. annual % increase in tolls.

2. A very low level of induced demand has been included in the modelling - research demonstrates that a higher level of induced demand is generally used for new expressways (up to 10%) which calls the modelling into question

3. The only local entry points for the Beaches Link are via Artarmon and Berry St North Sydney – no local time saved: 10mins to get to entry, 10 mins in tunnel, 10 mins to Dee Why or Manly = 30 min journey time.

4. The EIS makes it clear that this is not a local congestion solution – several local intersections fail or will experience a worse level of service both during and after construction as a result of the project. See the attached review for specific information

5. Does not achieve goals – only 10% reduction in short term on Military Rd based on FUTURE predicted traffic growth not today's levels. The growth model is not made available in the EIS so the travel time savings and congestion reductions are unable to be verified. Where a road is already at capacity it is self limiting ie) future growth cannot overreach the ceiling capacity of the road and therefore a travel time saving or reduction cannot be claimed on this basis.

6. Traffic differential modelling in the EIS shows increased traffic flows around the Warringah Freeway and on the Beaches exit roads. The project appears to transfer pinch points to alternate locations rather than solving congestion.

7. Confirmed as a capacity solution not a congestion solution – the EIS prioritises freight and through traffic as a goal of the project above local congestion.

8. No dedicated bus lane in tunnel so is not a public transport solution – express buses aren't express if they are going at the same speed as cars and don't have their own lane.

9. No ability to be converted to rail – the project team have confirmed that the gradients are too steep along this alignment for the project to be converted to a rail option.

10. Prior to Covid TfNSW data shows that the daily average traffic across the Spit Bridge has been decreasing for the last 4 years, while during the same period the traffic on Mona Vale Road through to Macquarie Park has been increasing. The Beaches Link is addressing an ever decreasing problem as less people are travelling to and from the city from the Northern Beaches.

11. There has been no assessment of traffic implications when the tunnel is closed for maintenance which would happen roughly monthly.

12. There has been no assessment of the pollution impact on surrounding neighbourhoods in the event of an emergency involving smoke or gas release (or other toxin). As there is no filtration there is no ability to prevent dispersion over school and residential communities.

13. Build the tunnels and more people use them, it moves the traffic congestion further down the road. Increasing road reliance as the option given in this project is road.

14. The premise of these projects as we have seen demonstrated in the Westconnex is to see local roads return to local communities. Road tolling is a user paid system and some will spend money to save time, but in reality the continual use of expensive tolls become unavoidable to the vast majority of drivers, even though the state government offers rebates based on tolls and vehicle registration. That amount in tolls far outweighs the rego costs of a family car. There is likely to be an increase of traffic on our local streets as motorists avoid paying the tolls. This is currently the case in Leichhardt, Haberfield, Lilyfield, Ashfield.

I request that the committee recommend that the business case for the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Freeway connection be released, which has never been made public. This will tell us whether the Beaches Link is the most efficient, cost effective infrastructure to reduce congestion to and from the Northern Beaches. 2. A full reassessment of the traffic flows to and from the Northern Beaches needs to include data collected after 2016, data also needs to be collected on the number of Northern Beaches residents who work in the area and how many work from home. 3. A reassessment of surface level traffic with all major local roads included in the operational modelling ie) Eastern Valley Way, the full span of Military Rd and Willoughby Rd was not included. The surface road traffic assessment should then inform the pollution impact of the project as the pollution contribution is not only limited to the stacks. 4. A reconsideration of a dive site along Flat Rock Drive due to the conflict between children and trucks and risks associated around safety, noise, dust, traffic etc If this is not reassessed ask for an overpass or underpass on Brook St to allow safe passage of children to school. Exclusion of trucks from the road during school bus times and pollution/ noise mitigation devices. 5. A comparative public transport options analysis to be published (via a reissuance of the EIS for public consultation) that compares the traffic implications both during and after construction of a mass transit solution. 6. Marshalling

should not be permitted on local streets and particularly not in the 11 Naremburn Conservation Area due to the increased vibration risk. Trucks should not be allowed to idle while marshalling and every load should be tested and inspected to ensure contaminants are fully contained.

Sincerely yours

John Berry

Cammeray 2062