

Submission
No 538

INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF THE WESTERN HARBOUR TUNNEL AND BEACHES LINK

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SUBMISSION FOR THE NSW PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF THE WHT AND BL

From Flora Johnson, Jamie Guignon, Benjamin Guignon and Jack Guignon

Paris St Balgowlah 2093

18 June 2021

INTRODUCTION

Jamie has lived in Paris St Balgowlah his entire life since 1979. He left briefly in his late 20s/ early 30s, but returned to the street with me and his young children in 2015 in hope to give our young children a similar upbringing in an idyllic cul de sac street. I have included a diagram at the bottom of the page showing our location.

Balgowlah golf course has been a huge part of our lives and is used as an extension of our backyard. After golf hours, the kids run around keeping them fit and active and we socialise with neighbours and also exercise on the course. With the street being so quiet, the kids often use it to ride their bikes, skateboards and play with their friends.

We are terrified to think that this project, which is estimated to take at least 7 years to complete, will take away all of this from our children, a time which they will never be able to get back.

Our oldest son, Benjamin, last year when back burning was at its peak, suffered a severe asthma attack resulting in him being hospitalised. Whilst he has had little issue since, we are concerned that the unfiltered stacks and the extra pollution caused from all the works will be a detriment to his health causing further breathing problems and possibly asthma.

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

From what I understand, there is no evidence to justify the immense cost of this project, especially with the impacts of COVID-19 and the amount of people now working from home. It has been estimated to save 38 minutes in journey time, however I believe this is a fabricated figure with no real proof or consideration of the current climate. Even with time saved, the infrastructure will surely increase the population of the Northern Beaches resulting in increased traffic and zero time saved.

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

I am absolutely shocked to learn that there is no plan for a bus lane to be included. With the world being so environmentally focussed, the way forward is public transport, not increasing traffic and pollution. At the very least, a bus lane much be implemented.

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

The cost of this project is estimated at \$14 billion, being the most expensive road tunnel project in NSW. As we all know, these budgets are more often than not exceeded, as I am sure this project will be.

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

Whilst the project is intended to reduce travel times and congestion, the EIS anticipates that various other roads, such as Military Rd, Warringah Freeway and Warringah Rd will increase in congestion and increase travel times for those using them.

I remember a number of days this summer when I wanted to take the children paddle boarding. I was unable to find a park at Clontarf, Fairlight or surrounding streets. The place was completely congested and overrun with people.

The BL is there to decrease traffic and travel time, yet in my opinion will do completely the opposite bringing more people into the area, in turn causing the need for more housing and loss of more land, bring us right back to where we are now.

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

Whilst the EIS was released publicly in late 2020, it was just before Christmas, in the midst of global pandemic and over 25,000 pages for the public to read. I doubt this document would have been read by much more than some of the local residents being directly affected. I know that 90% of the people I have come across in the past 6 months and discussed this project with had not read the document, knew about the proposals with some having no idea of its existence. Due to the lockdown restrictions, face to face public meetings were also unavailable to educate the community.

(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,

Covid has changed the world and its attitudes. Being in an office from 9-5 everyday is a thing of the past. With technological advances and this eye opening pandemic, people now have the ability and freedom to work from home. It has been shown by many companies that productivity rates have increased and they are implementing flexible working permanently.

As stated above, the cost of this project and its benefits were projected well before this global pandemic and the means do not justify the ends.

(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,

Absolutely, without a doubt. This project needs to be published accurately, clearly and in a format that people can easily read. Other proposals should also be outlined with costs.

(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,

From what I understand this is just the start of huge infrastructural changes to the Northern Beaches. The Frenchs Forest project appears to be reliant on the BL which will increase development and population. The bigger picture of the impact of the BL needs to be documented.

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

The BL project will completely destroy local habitats and significantly impact local wildlife in the area. Thousands of established trees, Balgowlah Golf Course dam over 12 hectares of land will be lost impacting local ecosystems and endangered species. Whilst it is proposed sports fields will be made, this will to make up for the significant damage this project will cause.

As I mentioned above, my son suffered a severe asthma attack last year due to poor air quality. The constant fumes, dust and pollution from the works, let alone when the unfiltered stacks will severely impact his quality of life.

The damage caused is irreversible and cannot be justified.

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

I am extremely fearful the impact this will have on our family. With two young children, 24/7 noise and disruptions is unacceptable. This issue has not been addressed nearly enough and needs far more consideration. This area is populated with young families, schools, preschools and it is your duty to ensure this community aware of the impacts and compensated accordingly should this proposal go ahead.

(m) any other related matter

We are one house away from Balgowlah Golf Course. From a totally selfish point of view, this project will take away the childhood which we have worked so hard to give our children. The constant noise and disruption during the build will impact our sleep, our kids being able to play safely in the street and an area for our children to exercise and play.

I was diagnosed with severe sleep deprivation at the end of 2019 due to being constantly woken by my young children. I was unable to work for 3 months. The children are both extremely light sleepers and are woken at a possum on the roof. I am concerned that the 24/7 disruption to our street and community will disrupt their sleep and cause further health issues for us.

I am concerned that this project is not being transparent in its goals and I believe there is a far better solution than the BL. Residents of the Beaches have been promised a tunnel for decades. It is an historic proposal not taking into account the future direction the world is heading.

