

**Submission
No 567**

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

Name: Mr Stephen McNulty

Date Received: 18 June 2021

Dear Members of the Public Works Committee,

I would like to voice my concerns about the proposed Beaches Link Tunnel and the impacts on the North Balgowlah community and the local environment. I object to its construction given the information available and the destruction it will cause.

I feel like it's a retro step, ill-timed and out of kilter with most modern cities where public transport takes automatic priority over car-oriented solutions, especially those that were sized for a pre-Covid world. The nature of work in a city has fundamentally changed.

I am happy to have my name published. Regards,
Stephen McNulty

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

- As yet, there has been no business case and cost benefit analysis performed for the Beaches Link as a stand-alone project, nor has anything been released publically.

Where is the Business Case? I've not seen one that details the information in the Terms of Reference.

- There has been no explanation as to why investment in our public transport system would not be sufficient to overcome any current traffic congestion issues. A business case focused upon the encouragement of private car usage is outdated and not in line with global environmental policies. The NSW government is privatising public transport including bus services on the Northern Beaches. Figures from the NSW transport agency have shown the punctuality of buses in the inner west have worsened since a private operator replaced State Transit last year. The NSW Government appears to be discouraging the use of public transport and encouraging the use of private vehicles. There is not even a bus lane in the proposed Beaches Link tunnel.

In my opinion, we should focus on mass-transit systems rather than increasing road infrastructure.

- There do not appear to be any tangible, measurable goals or outcomes. Travel time savings are based on pre-COVID data and as a result new assessments should be conducted given the number of people now working from home and not travelling into the city as regularly.

- I feel the community consultation has been poor. North Balgowlah will be significantly impacted by the Beaches Link (both during construction and once operational), and yet our household has not been directly approached for our views and opinions. The community consultation sessions through the EIS process presented vague information and staff were unable to answer detailed questions. On more than one occasion, I was told 'this plan will probably change'. There was a constantly moving target, with the community unsure of what the plan was and as a result, it made it difficult to respond. This level of uncertainty has certainly caused me some anxiety.
- Requests to extend the EIS consultation period, which given the EIS's size and sometimes complex language were I believe to be reasonable requests, were rejected. I have some familiarity with documents such as these, and I still found it a difficult document to wade through, particularly given its length.

(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,

- I do not trust that the project is transparent, and as a result, I do not believe the project should proceed prior to all costings and the full business case being released to the public for review and assessment. WestConnex for example, is over budget due to a lack of transparency but given that has been revealed once the project had commenced there were few consequences for the government.

- A business case and cost-benefit analysis should be conducted for all public transport options and released to the public.
 - Transport Minister Andrew Constance has stated publicly that he wants to sign contracts for the construction of the Beaches Link project before the state election in 2023. This gives the community no faith in a transparent planning process to assess projects fairly on their merits – when the decision to build seems to have already been made by the Minister. Statements like this also place undue pressure on the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) to rush making its "determination" on the many complex and serious problems raised in the submissions to the EIS, including by DPIE themselves.
- The construction phase of the project will undoubtedly impact North Balgowlah residents with dust, noise, vibration, and heavy vehicle traffic in the area. North Balgowlah will have construction surrounding most of the suburb and the EIS indicates that during construction there will be.
 - o Over 3,000 vehicles per day across all sites.
 - o 1,690 vehicles per day at the Balgowlah Golf Course site alone.
 - o 1.5 heavy vehicles every minute or 4.5 vehicles (total) every minute.
 - o Over 4,000 homes subjected to excessive noise
 - o Construction work to proceed 24/7 for up to 7 years.
 - o Exposure to contaminated dust (potential lead, hydrocarbons and asbestos contamination)

I am not satisfied with the information TfNSW has given us thus far in relation to how this project will truly impact our daily lives. The 2018 Parliamentary Inquiry into the WestConnex project found “the various noise mitigation measures offered by Roads and Maritime Services were wholly inadequate to substantially reduce heavy construction noise.” (Finding 14). There is no evidence to suggest noise mitigation measures have been improved.

I also do not think that it is adequate for residents to “police” contractors working outside of restrictions. There should be an independent advocate or arbitrator appointed to work on behalf of the community.

I feel like our voice has not been listened to and I hope this parliamentary inquiry is not too late.