

**Submission
No 569**

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

Name: Ms Linda Curnow

Date Received: 18 June 2021

Linda Curnow

Cremorne

15th June 2021

Re: Northern Beaches Tunnel Link - Objection

I write to object most strongly to the poorly planned Beaches Tunnel Link and the Western Harbour tunnel. I urge the Parliamentary enquiry into these proposed tunnels to give greater consideration to the environmental damage and the permanent loss of our natural and physical amenities which will ensue, and which have not been properly assessed in the Environmental Impact Statement by Transport for NSW (TfNSW).

I have lived in Cremorne for more than 20 years. I have raised my family here and our lives are centred in the lower north shore and southern zone of the Northern Beaches. We swim; walk; play, train and referee sport; attend school and school events; use services such as driving lessons and shopping centres; and spend time with friends. Over the recent long weekend I made five trips to the northern beaches.

The Beaches and Western Harbour 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:

(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.

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

- the cost benefits need to consider all affected areas, not just the commuters in the northern beaches.
- The project did not include a cost benefit analysis which was publicly available.

(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,

- 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.

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 ration

- The tunnel access and egress are poorly planned in North Sydney sending a lot of traffic into North Sydney which is generally at a standstill in peak hour.

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

- I have attended in-person consultation sessions throughout the consultation period. The community consultation has been inadequate - an example was the initial in-person consultation could not answer questions about local transport impacts – road and walking access.

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

I am concerned about the environmental and heritage impacts of some of the plans. I have read some of the proposals on restoration of land and flora and they never go further than “best efforts”. If there is no other option than to decimate the flora in an area for the construction period the restoration should return the area to a state better than it was at the start, not “best efforts”.

This will be the first tunnel built in Sydney with such enormous and significant environmental impact to our region with no attempt to dramatically reduce the environmental consequences of the proposed Northern Beaches Tunnel link. The environmental damage in the EIS grossly underestimates the actual damage which will occur. The following summary of environmental damage has been identified in the EIS but has not been addressed:

- Removal of some 2500 trees and permanent loss of greenspace with no local biodiversity offsets;
- The permanent loss of the diverse habitat at Balgowlah Golf course which will be replaced by open green fields.
- Changes to the Manly dam catchment area, and into the Garigal National Park will impact several endangered and very rare species.
- Rainwater runoff to Queenscliff lagoon and subsequent ocean outfall from Wakehurst Parkway.
- Predicted reduction in water flows down Burnt Bridge Creek of 96%;
- Reduction to the water table in Seaforth and Balgowlah which will have an enormous impact on remaining trees and plants of our area.

The recent significant weather event of March saw flood waters down Burnt Bridge Creek were far higher than predicted in the EIS. With loss of tree and ground cover, together with increased hard surfaces, this will become a significant flood hazard which has not been accounted for in the EIS.

Manly dam catchment: The widening of Wakehurst Parkway from two to six lanes will do untold damage to the Many dam catchment area, threatening endangered species. The EIS states the topography of the area means the environmental impacts of the build cannot be controlled along this route. This will threaten amongst other sensitive fauna and flora the recently re-discovered climbing fish (*galaxias brevipinnis*) – thought extinct and which dates back 60 million years. Manly dam is home to diverse and endangered bird species.

Queenscliff Lagoon will have nearly half a million litres of wastewater pumped into it daily, contaminating the lagoon and beaches. Queenscliff beach is only 1.5km from the marine sanctuary of **Cabbage Tree Bay** – ocean currents will ensure this area is also polluted. This is the daily swimming area of over 700 members of the Bold and Beautiful and many splinter groups – of which I am one. This is a precious marine resource.

There should be no risk to our waterways. We have spent decades restoring the waterways of Sydney. When I moved here in the 1980's swimming in the harbour and at many of the beaches was impacted by pollution. The city has done a lot of work to make the water clean. Swimming in Cabbage Tree Bay is a joyous experience and should not be put at risk for a road system.

Sydney is a beautiful city. Proposed development that does not consider the beauty of our waterways, wildlife and physical environment is extremely upsetting and stressful. As a city, we keep repeating the same mistakes, shaving away the glories of the city. These tunnels will make a huge impact on the city.

(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. 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 Cremorne and Neutral Bay, north of Military Rd, will be able to move about our suburbs and to the northern beaches once the tunnel is built.

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.

Access:

Currently I am blessed with walking to work in North Sydney but I have at times commuted to Parramatta, Chullora, Haymarket and Milsons Point. A major area of concern for me with the tunnel plans is the uncertainty on access to our suburb and out of our suburb. I have seen information that the Ernest St southbound entrance to the Harbour Bridge and tunnel will be closed sending all the commuters from north of Military Rd onto an already busy Military Rd. It is already difficult for us to access Military Rd, city bound, in peak hour due to the lack of right hand turns. The few right hand turns there are a very congested. If we cross Military Rd to turn on from the south we will be routed through the Redlands school zone and will then enter Military Rd in a bus lane, slowing down the flow of buses while we merge into the other lanes.

I have also heard that the right hand turn from Spit Rd into Ourimbah Rd might be closed. This is very worrying. I have no idea how the people north of Military Rd will access their homes when returning from activities east of Spit Rd and north of Military Rd.

We will not be able to access the new tunnel for our commute when it does open as it would require us to drive into North Sydney and negotiate heavy traffic when we can currently use Ernest St with direct freeway access.

In Cremorne we have already lost local amenity due to changes for the B1 buses. My local bus stop is closed in peak hour and much parking has been lost. It seems we will lose more amenity for the benefit of the people in the northern beaches, without any obvious wins. The predicted reduction in traffic on Military Rd is 10% which is not a lot of benefit.

I am also concerned about the impact of the construction works around the area for my walk to work, as well as on traffic. There is already construction in St Leonards Park and I understand that the footbridge across the Warringah Freeway, along Military Rd, will be closed and relocated. There has been no local engagement on the impact of this closure.

Generally it appears that travel times on road or foot will increase in the short term, and the long term for residents of the lower north shore, in particular those north of Military Rd.

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 Cremorne and Neutral Bay north of Military Rd will become 'locked' in our suburb once completed due to poor access to the freeway and compromised ability to move around our suburbs.

Public Space and Facilities

Large swathes of public space appear to be assigned for construction, including parking for workers, for example, on the Cammeray Golf Course. This Golf Course also provides walking access across the area. I am appalled that my community has to give up recreation space and amenity so that workers can drive to work in an area that has a good bus service from the city, and reasonable access from St Leonards, Chatswood, Manly and North Sydney.

As the location of much medium density housing growth the residents of Cremorne and Neutral Bay cannot afford to lose access to open space.

If the road access to north Cremorne is reduced we will also need to allow more time to access recreation at Balmoral. With the loss of North Sydney Pool this is the only local swimming option.

(1) the impact of the project on nearby public sites, including indigenous sites

The Manly dam area is also significant to our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with important cultural areas. The aboriginal sites along Wakehurst Parkway should not be affected or put

at risk. It is time that we, as a nation, respected our indigenous history and did everything possible to look after it.

In conclusion: The economic viability of the tunnel has not been demonstrated. Declarations made prior to the last State election have been relied upon without further detailed analysis and review. The benefits of the tunnel are questionable but the impact of the tunnel during the build and the loss of our natural environment and the amenity of our suburbs will be permanent. The knowledge of which is enormously distressing to our family. I am dismayed the project will even go ahead given the poor business case and a spectacular failure to consider adequate public transport options.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Curnow

Cremorne