

Reference: SSI-22004371

Re: Blackheath To Little Hartley (EIS)

1<sup>st</sup> March 2023

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter is our response and objection to your EIS for the Great Western Highway Blackheath to Little Hartley tunnel and the associated works, moreover, the direct impact it will have on our property, neighbouring properties, our happiness and health in retirement, both physical and mental.

Our primary concerns have not been whether or not the tunnel and/or roadworks should go ahead; we are not disputing that with increased traffic volumes, improvements to roads need to be made or alternate routes considered, but rather we are concerned with the potential short and long term impact it would have on our property and the remaining years of our lives. Furthermore, the communication on potential consequences of this proposed development, throughout this entire process has been poor to vague.

Initially we were made aware of the potential of tunnel being built a few years ago by representatives visiting door to door, and were told at that time that the only thing we would see from the rear of our property was a “dome like structure” in the distance covering the entrance to the tunnel. Obviously these initial meetings are either “feeling out” exercises or a way of breaking the news gently, but by no means were any harsh truths revealed. Even up to just a few weeks ago our main concern was the venting of the tunnel itself. Being involved in the construction industry we are aware that fumes rise, and given that there will be a concentration of vehicle emissions within the tunnel and that Blackheath would be the highest point, it is logical to assume that there would be potential for this end to emit higher volumes of those emissions. However those concerns were surpassed enormously by the volume of harsh

truths revealed in the 26 chapters, and in particular chapter 5 of the EIS. Most concerning of these related to the area directly behind our property.

Initially like many people on this side of our street, we bought this property in 1997 on the basis that the area behind the property, would and could never be built upon, as it was part of the water catchment area. The rear view of the property is one of a pristine, unaltered native bushland. As part of the said water catchment area it was fenced off to prevent contamination, and while it was not possible to use this area for recreational walking, it was a small price to pay for the view, the birdlife that it brings to the rear garden, and even the occasional visit from an echidna.

We were led to believe until very recently that the traffic at this end during road and tunnel construction would be very light and not impact Evans lookout Rd. We were also led to believe by certain artist's renderings that this area directly behind our property, and certainly at the very least 100 or so metres from the rear property boundary, would be left untouched. But the truth is, as revealed mostly in Chapter 5 of the EIS is as follows:

- The worksite will extend across **23 hectares** and will back onto 9 homes.
- All** vegetation will be cleared and the land will be levelled.
- A 100m car parking lot will be built
- During construction there will be truck and light vehicle movement up to 790 times per day (estimated), which at its peak could be as many as 260 times in an hour.
- Trucks hauling the "spoils" from the tunnel will operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- An uncovered tunnels spoil site of up to 5000 cubic metres will be created.
- Permanent buildings** will be built for tunnel infrastructure and servicing.
- The worksite will be operational for **9 years**.

Firstly let's tackle the most obvious question. How is it that an area that was considered so previously fragile, that the act of simply taking a walk could have an adverse effect on the water catchment, can now be decimated and turned into a construction site? Did the magic pill of "acquisition" change the laws of

physics? Are we now supposed to believe that water within this 23 hectare area will now run up hill during its construction?

That aside the next logical question is going to be about the noise. We are both 68 and 78 years old, and really had no intention of moving. But please explain how we are expected to live with this noise of both construction and traffic for what might be our last remaining years? What was previously promised was a lack of disruption and traffic, with vehicles entering the site from the highway end. We are now told that all light traffic, truck and cars will now drive past the front of our property and enter the site at the rear by Valley View Rd. Why? Why not stick to vehicles entering via the main highway to minimise impact on the public? Or is it simply that the authority in charge makes a statement to appease the public and then changes its mind in the hope that no one will notice or say anything? Added to the noise problem will undoubtedly be floodlighting for works and carpark security beaming into our back garden relentlessly.

Seven days a week, twelve months a year, just living in the vain hope that somehow this latest generation of cotton wool wrapped, “high viz” clad workforce will manage to stop leaning on their shovels long enough to get the job done within the planned 9 years, and we live long enough to see the site dismantled, and regain some peace as we gaze upon the few spindly saplings that you refer to as rehabilitation, replacing this once beautiful setting.

Given that no doubt nothing will be done to alleviate any of these fears, regardless of how many questions are asked or how many people protest, then the question remains what will be done for those of us who find the situation unbearable?

Will there be any consideration in the monumentally blown out budget to compensate those for the subsequent drop in property value associated with these works or indeed the cost of moving away from what will surely be for us a life changing debacle?

We would dearly love someone to make the time to talk to us about these questions in earnest and in person, although we sincerely doubt that this will happen. It is more likely that the offer of putting our views forward on these issues is merely a box ticking exercise, and like every other major development state and nationwide, will go ahead unaltered regardless of its effect on

smaller people, while someone at the top gets rich. Call us cynical, but prove us wrong, we dare you.

Sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact a signature.