

# Response to Western Harbour Tunnel Environmental Impact Statement

March 2020

## THE NORTH SYDNEY AREA

This submission focuses on the impacts of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway Upgrade (together “**the Project**”) on the North Sydney area.

The North Sydney area faces a significant planning challenge from needing to bear the combined impacts from:

- Being Sydney’s second CBD
- Having one of the highest residential densities in Sydney
- Being the proposed intersection point for three major motorways
  - The Warringah Freeway, this Project and BeachesLink
- Having two rail lines pass through the CBD
  - Being the North Shore line and new Metro line
- Being the junction for three major bus corridors
  - Pacific Highway, Miller Street and Military Road
- Having major health and education clusters
  - Having North Shore Hospital, the Mater hospital and ancillary health services
  - The North Sydney campus of the Australian Catholic University
  - Having ten primary and secondary schools in and around North Sydney
- The proposed significant increase in residents in St Leonards and Crows Nest
  - This increase could be up to 35,000 or a 230% increase on the existing population
  - Planning is already developing a 2036 Plan for this
  - The impact of this needs to be considered as it is within 2 kms of the Project and up to six major towers have already been approved.

Without properly and effectively integrating all of these existing and proposed aspects, poor planning decisions could result in the North Sydney area becoming a nightmare in which to live and work, with consequential adverse impacts on residents, workers, motorists and bus commuters. Accordingly, the assessment required of this Project must be of the highest standard because of the extensive major potential adverse outcomes if wrong decisions are made and too much of a burden is placed on North Sydney.

**Because of the unique characteristics of North Sydney identified above, it is not fair to place unique, undue and onerous burdens on the North Sydney community and sacrifice this area so as to benefit the Northern Beaches.**

## **ADVERSE TRAFFIC IMPACTS IN NORTH SYDNEY**

### **The EIS is flawed because the traffic modelling does not incorporate all the currently approved high rise unit development at St Leonards**

Chapter 27 sets out the projects incorporated into the modelling. It does not include any of the many additional high rise unit buildings recently completed, under construction and already approved in St Leonards; nor Planning's favoured approach for South St Leonards. These buildings and this area are within two kilometres of the Project and so MUST be incorporated into the traffic modelling.

The impact of these high rise unit buildings on traffic will be far greater than any new school buildings at Shore or Wenona already incorporated into the EIS.

### **The traffic modelling has to incorporate the whole Pacific Highway from St Leonards to North Sydney**

The traffic modelling of the Pacific Highway has to be extended to cover its length from the Warringah Freeway at North Sydney to Gore Hill in order to fully assess the impact of the Project. This will incorporate the impacts of the high rise units at St Leonards and a further scenario proposed below so as to enable traffic impacts to be comprehensively assessed.

### **A key scenario should be done on the currently proposed St Leonards-Crows Nest 2036 Plan**

While not approved, Planning is currently working on a new 2036 plan for St Leonards-Crows Nest. As mentioned previously, this could add up to 35,000 or a 230% increase on the existing population.

Jacobs has already completed traffic modelling on St Leonards-Crows Nest and should be able to readily integrate this with modelling for this Project.

This modelling showed major peak hour congestion on the Pacific Highway at St Leonards station and the Falcon Street intersection. This can be expected to worsen if additional traffic is diverted onto the Pacific Highway because of the Project.

### **Government Policy of Integrating Major Planning and Transport Decisions Must Be Applied for this Project**

Government policy is to ensure that planning and transport decisions are properly integrated. Accordingly both this Project and the rejuvenation of St Leonards-Crows Nest need to be considered together because of the significant cumulative impacts that both will have on the North Sydney area.

Should the Minister decide first regarding this Project, then St-Leonards-Crows Nest will have to be assessed as an incremental project. This will include its incremental traffic impacts to this Project along the length of the Pacific Highway from St Leonards to North Sydney, per the section above.

Because of the significant impact of both this Project and St Leonards-Crows Nest, far better decision making will occur if they are both considered together.

### **Impact on local roads in Crows Nest**

The Project will have significant adverse impacts on local roads in Crows Nest, by diverting traffic that currently exits from the Warringah Freeway onto Falcon Street to the Ernest Street and Miller Street exits.

This will have a major impact on Ernest Street west of Miller Street as it will need to bear additional traffic from the Sydney Harbour Tunnel (SHT) exiting at Ernest Street as well as traffic from the Sydney Harbour Bridge (SHB) coming off and turning left at Miller Street and then turning right into Ernest Street. Ernest Street is currently a significant residential street.

Additional adverse impacts can also be expected in Burlington Street (a residential street) and the Crows Nest village as traffic tries to rat run through to the intersections of Hume Street and Albany Street with the Pacific Highway.

There will be a further adverse impacts at the intersection of West Street and Falcon Street as this SHB and SHT traffic continues to try to get to St Leonards-Crows Nest or beyond.

Ernest Street, West Street and Burlington Street are all significant residential streets, with the first two streets already choked during peak hour.

These impacts have not been examined in the traffic study and further work is required. Otherwise the impact on local roads in Crows Nest will not be assessed and a proper decisions not able to be made.

### **Adverse impacts on North Sydney motorists cannot be offset elsewhere**

Arguing that motorists adversely impacted by the projected increased delays in North Sydney will receive offsetting travel time benefits is incorrect (bottom pf page 282 of the Jacobs traffic study) and this claim cannot be accepted. It assumes that all travel through North Sydney will be on motorways, whereas motorists are travelling in many different directions; and ignores that those travelling on motorways will also have to pay a toll to use them, which will add to their travel costs incurred through delays in North Sydney.

### **Adverse Impact on Bus Commuters from the loss of the Bus Lane in Arthur Street North**

The loss of the am peak hour Bus Lane in Arthur Street North should not be allowed as this will significantly add to bus travel times to the city and disadvantage bus commuters.

### **Encouraging A Rat Run through Waverton and Wollstonecraft**

Traffic heading to Greenwich, Longueville, south Lane Cove and to the Gladesville Bridge from the SHB and SHT (the latter diverting onto the SHB) will be encouraged to “rat run” through Waverton and Wollstonecraft because of the Project. This is because the Falcon Street exit they would have used previously will now be closed.

Exiting at Ernest Street or Miller Street will increase travel times by having to “dog leg” through Crows Nest via Ernest Street and West Street onto Falcon Street heading west. Additional delays will also be incurred due to the additional traffic volumes on these streets.

Similarly motorists will encounter increased travel times to River Road if they exit at North Sydney and travel via the Pacific Highway.

Accordingly this is likely to increase traffic seeking a quicker journey along the Lavender Street / Union Street rat run at North Sydney and then through Waverton & Wollstonecraft to North Sydney.

This is an unacceptable impact.

### **CONSTRUCTION AT ST LEONARDS PARKS**

The proposed construction site at Ridge Street is in the most heavily used part of the Park for recreation purposes. It is the major dog run for the park and is attended by residents from North Sydney, Crows Nest, Neutral Bay, Waverton, Kirribilli, Cammeray and St Leonards. It is also heavily used by commercial personal trainers and boot camps. It is also a major site for fireworks on the Harbour.

The size of this construction site accordingly has to be minimised.

In addition, the construction site cannot block north-south pedestrian access to the east of The Greens bowling club. This is a key pedestrian route – both from walking around The Greens and from the Ridge Street pedestrian foot bridge.

### **THE WHT EXIT AT ST LEONARDS PARK / RIDGE STREET**

As discussed above, the North Sydney WHT exit portal is in a key part of St Leonards Park. It is essential that post-construction that the portal minimises its impact on the park, so that dog owners, training and picnics can happily continue their activities there.

Accordingly, the portal must be designed to minimise its impact on the Park. The portal should not eat into the level part of the park and be covered as much as possible on the slope below. It should also be required to have a significant buffer of trees and shrubs around it, per the existing botanic buffer to the Warringah Freeway along the eastern edge of St Leonards Park.

Minimising the impact on St Leonards Park is a quite reasonable request as inner west residents are getting a major new park at Rozelle from the WHT and WestConnex. It would be inequitable for North Sydney residents to lose out from the WHT.

### **LOSS OF PARKING IN ALFRED STREET NORTH**

As mentioned previously, North Sydney is one of the most dense areas in Sydney and Australia. A significant number of units have been built around Alfred Street North. Such construction would have been due to the significant street available parking. It is unacceptable for this now to be removed and so adversely impact residents.

The street parking on Alfred Street North must be retained.

## **HAVING A FREEWAY AND RAILWAY DOESN'T ENSURE GOOD TRAFFIC OUTCOMES**

Notwithstanding that both Green Square and the Mascot Town Centre are served by both freeways and a train line, traffic in those areas is frequently gridlocked and well above acceptable standards.

The additional demands being put on North Sydney listed on page 1 make the likelihood of even worse outcomes than both Green Square and the Mascot Town Centre now bear very likely. Accordingly, the experience of these areas must be considered and decisions must be taken to avoid them.