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Submission regarding Great Western Highway Upgrade Blackheath to Little Hartley

I do not support the full plan for this tunnel upgrade as I have concerns about its environmental and visual impact and on the potential for de-stabilisation of the fragile landscape of the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains.

I am concerned about destabilisation of the ground beneath the Villages of Blackheath and Mount Victoria and of all the surrounding World Heritage Landscape.

As has been evidenced at The Gardens of Stone, mining below the surface can have structural impact on the fragile landforms above despite the best intentions and planning of the mining contractors. Not all water courses and fault lines can be detected to prevent such 'accidents'.

So I personally would err on the side of extreme caution when dealing with this significant landscape.

As for a safer town centre for cyclists and pedestrians in Blackheath, we are talking about a village, not a metropolitan centre, and these are not present risks and not worth building a road diversion tunnel for.

Whilst I acknowledge that there can be large traffic backlogs coming over the Victoria Pass and into Mt Victoria and Blackheath on weekends and public holidays, I am concerned that such a huge and long tunnel project, added to many underway in and around Sydney, can have detrimental effects and also can increase our reliance on motor vehicles and trucks and the sole means of transport and freight from the West into Sydney. This leads us inescapably into future reliance on this infrastructure system.

To bring us into line with other world standards what is preferable for me is a fast rail system.

The cost for families employing current internal combustion engines and paying ever increasing road tolls makes it prohibitively costly to travel.

Tunnel Ventilation : Exhaust Towers option:

Visually I am concerned about the tunnel exhaust towers planned proposed in relation to the size of the local communities, the scale of the landscape, height of existing buildings, and disjuncture with the landform.

Tunnel Ventilation : Portal emissions option:

The Longitudinal Ventilation option seems highly risky and unproven for the and rescue/ emergency options for this more isolated area are sketchy given the scale of this project and relative isolation of the area.

The tunnel will only make a major difference to overall traffic flow on weekends and public holidays and the tolls would be anticipated to be high cost for many years to come beyond the viable use of fossil fuel vehicles. Will new infrastructure need to be added as soon as 3-5 years down the track?

By personal choice I do not use the M4 tunnel into Sydney. The time saving is negligible and the cost adds up. I wonder if offered the choice families will pay for the proposed tunnel ? Rather it is a freight diversion that will ease traffic congestion.

I would prefer to see an upgrade to railway infrastructure.

In terms of the ongoing construction period, and likely delays, I'm really concerned about the ongoing disruption to normal life, further and potentially extreme traffic delays and backlogs caused by the construction, visual impact over several years of the construction sites, infrastructure and increased heavy duty vehicle traffic that is involved. Evidence of such disruption is evident all over Sydney, for example at the approach the Victoria Road and Anzac Bridge from the Western Distributor.

Is this kind of visual carnage really something that is suitable to impose upon the still relatively pristine Blue Mountains environment?