



**Re: Great Western Highway Blackheath to Little Hartley submission**

**By: ACANSW Inc**

**In principle our organisation is supportive of a tunnel option but ONLY if the included concerns are addressed. We believe that consideration is needed to protect the escarpment and rock-climbing areas which the tunnel will underlay. From the supporting documents it appears that this matter has not been considered.**

This submission is made on behalf of the Australian Climbing Association of New South Wales Inc (ACANSW). ACANSW was formed to address climbing access issues on behalf of climbers throughout NSW and has over 500 members including the affiliated Sydney Rock Climbing Club and an active coalition of climbers in the Blue Mountains region. The aim of the ACANSW is to advocate for and promote responsible and sustainable access to rock climbing areas in NSW.

This submission focuses on the potential effects of the project on rock climbing, as ACANSW's main purpose and expertise reside in this field.

## **CONCERNS**

There is no mention in the EIS of the following points:

1. Cliff line damage assessment from vibrations of the Tunnel Boring Machine or other boring method or from dewatering and/or depressurising strata beneath the cliffs
2. Maximum settlement criteria for cliff faces
3. Maintaining a safe access to the public on the cliff faces during construction
4. Monitoring of the cliff faces during and after construction

## **REQUESTS**

1. Reassure climbers and the public that the valuable natural asset that is the Western Escarpment of Mount Victoria has been considered when the alignment of the tunnel has been designed.
2. Provide risk assessment for the cliff faces with the proposed alignment.

3. Provide a plan to maintain safe access to the public on the cliff faces during construction. ACANSW to be informed of potential closures of climbing areas during and after construction.
4. Consider a risk mitigation plan to reduce probability of cliff damage when boring under the areas of concern
5. Provide ongoing monitoring of escarpment stability after tunnel completion.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Climbers have been enjoying the world class climbing destination of the Blue Mountains for more than 70 years. Rock climbing is a major source of tourism in the region, with significant numbers of visitors coming from interstate and internationally. Many of the residents of the towns of Blackheath and Mt Victoria moved to the area for ease of access to this climbing, including Olympic climbing athletes and significant numbers that are employed in climbing related businesses such as guiding, retail and education. These residents contribute substantially to the region's economy.

ACANSW recognises the need for an upgrade of the GWH and broadly agrees with the long tunnel option instead of the now abandoned Blackheath viaduct proposal. ACANSW's main concern is about the impacts of tunnelling on the integrity of the natural cliff faces West of Mount Victoria.

## **CLIMBING AREAS**

The tunnel traverses beneath the rock-climbing areas of Bay Tree Towers, Quiet Place, Grace Gully and Loft Chimney, and passes just north of the Sunset Rock area. These areas comprise over 1.5km of immediately overlying cliffs, with more than 90 recorded rock climbs. Some of these routes are very popular with locals and tourists alike.

Of particular concern is the Grace Gully area, which is utilized by commercial climbing and abseiling companies, emergency services for training and hundreds of recreational climbers. The location of the carpark near the cliff edge allows ease of access to this area that is unique to the region. The south facing aspect allows climbing activities to occur all through the day in summer – another unique aspect of this area.

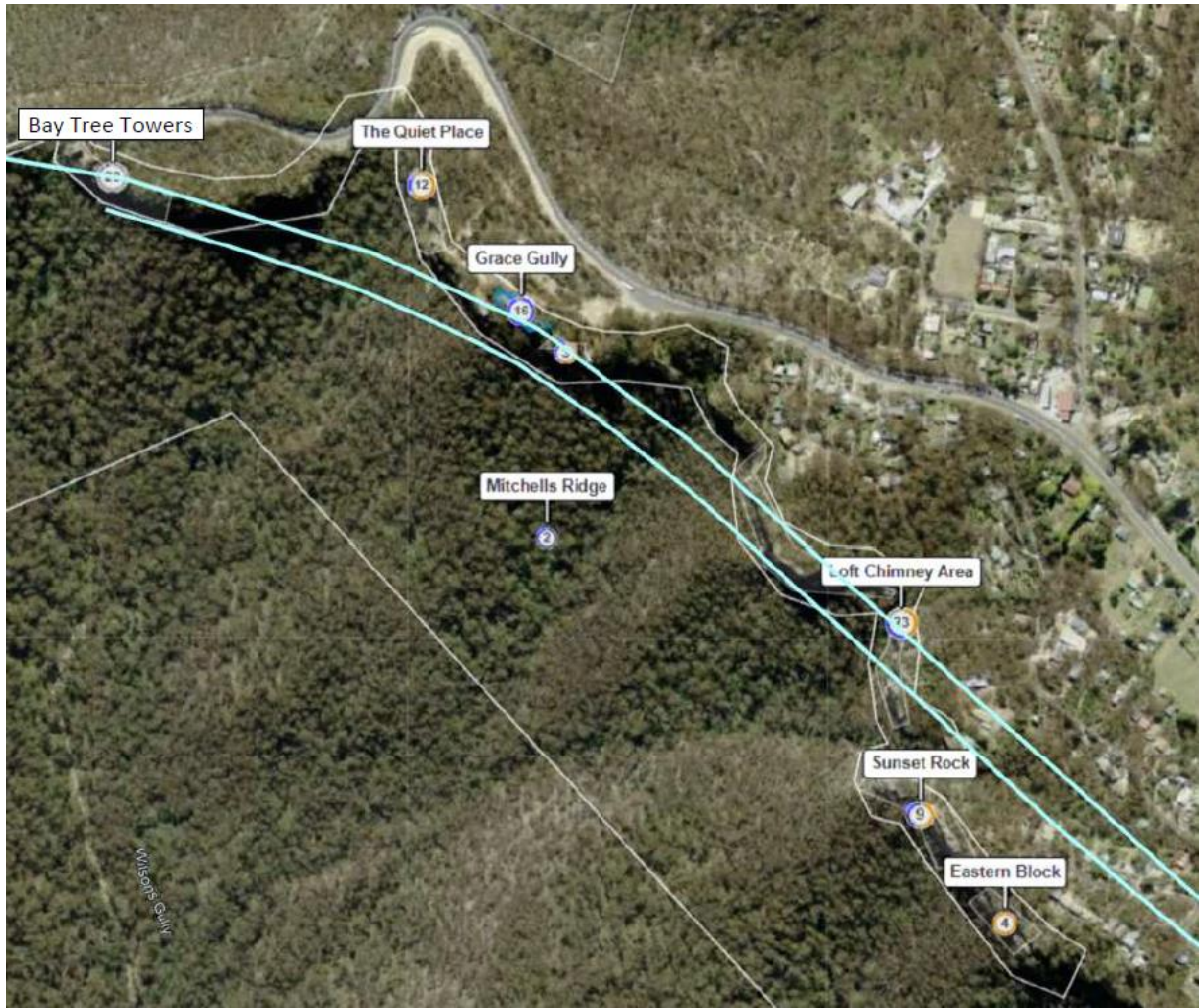
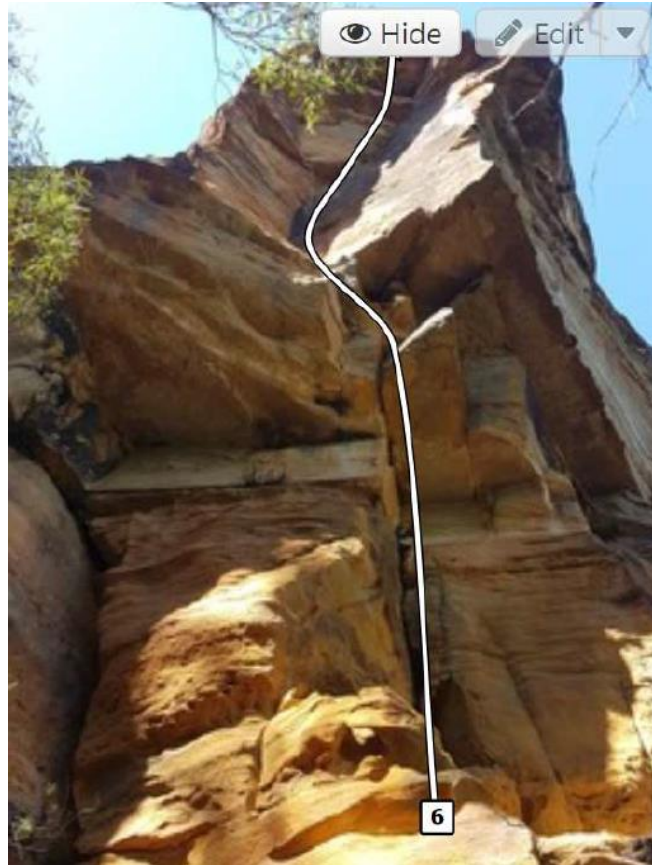


Figure 1: Climbing Areas and proposed tunnel alignment



*Figure 2: Example of a cliff with a rock climbing route at “The Quiet Place” which could be considered at risk of damage*

## **CONCLUSION**

ACANSW requests that the above concerns are addressed and that climbers are communicated with about any matters related to the tunnel construction that will impact on climbing amenity.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

ACANSW recognise that this land is the traditional Country of the Darug, Gundagara and Wiradjuri people and wish to pay respect to past and present Elders. We hope that we can work with Elders and emerging leaders to further learn about Culture and Country and to avoid inadvertent harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

- We acknowledge and accept the DPIE disclaimer and declaration.
- ACANSW Inc has made no political donations at any time.

**Coauthors: Jacques Beaudoin (Blue Mountains Coalition ACANSW member) and Vanessa Wills (ACANSW President)**

**Australian Climbing Association NSW Inc  
7/12 Chester St  
Annandale, NSW 2038**