

From: North Shore and Northern Beaches Schools

18 February 2021

Dear,

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP
Member for Willoughby
Premier of NSW
Shop 26
145-151 Sailors Bay Road
Northbridge NSW 2063
willoughby@parliament.nsw.gov.au

The Hon. Robert Stokes MP
Member for Pittwater
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces
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pittwater@parliament.nsw.gov.au
www.nsw.gov.au/ministerstokes

Ms Felicity Wilson
Member for North Shore
Suite 3
40 Yeo Street
Neutral Bay NSW 2089
northshore@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Mr James Griffin
Member for Manly
Shop 2
2 Wentworth Street
Manly NSW 2095
northshore@parliament.nsw.gov.au

cc:/
Secretary Jim Betts
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Osec.corro@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Mr Andrew Constance
Minister for Transport and Roads
bega@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Premier, Mr Stokes, Ms Wilson and Mr Griffin,

Beaches Link and Gore Hill Extension Environmental Impact Statement
Re: Urgent Request for Extension of time to Review the EIS

Follow up to the same letter sent 11th February, 2021.

We are writing to you regarding the Beaches Link and Gore Hill Extension EIS which went on exhibition on the 9th December 2020. Firstly, we do recognize that additional time above the minimum requirement of 28 days has been given for the exhibition of the EIS however we request your consideration of an extension for the following reasons:

- 1) 2020 was an extremely challenging year for everyone. The school community, it's teachers, parents and students were thrown into a state of constant change with Covid. Whilst we rose to the challenge it would be fair to say that the majority of our community came to the end of the year exhausted and in need of a break. The EIS was released at the time many private schools were finishing their year and as public schools were winding down.
- 2) The EIS 12,000+ pages long. It is longer and more complex than the Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway EIS that went on public exhibition as school returned last year (19th January to 30th March 2020). The additional complexity exists due to the sensitivity of the foreshore geology, green spaces, the landfill site, gully's and the diversity of habitats the tunnel and it's construction sites interact with as well as coinciding works and an almost 100% residential route across school zones.
- 3) Accessing these complex documents, while many families took a break over the summer holidays, was difficult, as was logging into online consultation sessions often with only the phone available. This has been evidenced by the low level of participation in online consultation sessions and submission to date. What is equally difficult is reviewing these complex documents whilst caring for children on school holidays.
- 4) Whilst the same amount of time was granted for the Western Harbour Tunnel EIS review we note that the community did ask that that consultation be suspended due to the Covid outbreak and subsequent shutdowns. This request was refused. The same concerns around the effectiveness of consultation during Covid were raised across many of the Western Harbour Tunnel EIS submissions due to both the timing of exhibition, accessibility to documents and the complexity of the documents produced. For example, North Sydney Council WHTWUFU EIS submission states: *"Given the short time frame relative to the scale of the project and volume of exhibition documentation, some sections of the EIS have not been the subject of detailed review and the response prepared to such a voluminous and highly technical document, has been influenced by the time available to comment."* And Willoughby Council's WHTWUFU submission states: *"..residents have raised significant concern about the volume and density of information to be absorbed in a short period of time. It is unfortunate that no consideration has been given to changed consultation arrangements and stakeholder submissions in light of the impact of State and Federal Government advice and legislation arising from the COVID-19 global pandemic."*

- 5) We have not been provided access to hard copy documents and there are many in our community who do not have reliable soft copy access. Willoughby Council has just advised that it has a copy, however they were closed during the Christmas period. The community has not been notified of the availability of hard copy documents. Libraries have been open for sometime across the area. We request that hard copies be placed at North Sydney, Willoughby and Manly Libraries (and relevant branch libraries), provided to P&C's where requested and sufficient time is allocated to review them.
- 6) For most of our schools, P&C Meetings are only just being planned and we have not yet had the chance to review the documents or communicate to our communities. Our first priority as we return to school is, of course, our children's wellbeing and education.
- 7) We want to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved for our children and families. There are at least 26 schools along the alignment of the Western Harbour and Beaches Tunnel route and with 500-1000 children at each school we estimate that 20,000+ kids will be impacted by the heavy construction. It is well documented in the EIS that there are complex longer term risks the community is seeking to understand such as local traffic implications, impacts on the environment and pollution. Of particular concern amongst our families is the stated "potential to increase levels of stress and anxiety" during Covid and a period of financial uncertainty.
- 8) Communities along the planned route have had a multitude of development submissions and plans to review from the Metro Developments, to high rise developments, to new housing strategies, plans of management and new pools. Never before can we remember being asked to give feedback on so much at the one time - and never before have we been asked to do so during a pandemic. This needs to be considered and factored into the time frames for consultation.

Please consider the health & wellbeing of communities and the best outcomes of the project in granting this very sincere request to extend the exhibition time of the EIS. We believe an extension until the **end of April** would give sufficient time to engage the community in good faith and provide the opportunity for genuine consultation once families are settled into the school term. According to project documents and announcements further decisions about this project won't be made for some time. You therefore have a very positive opportunity to ensure the community is properly consulted.

Given the closing date we would appreciate your response as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Names redacted for public use due to privacy reasons

Four Northern Beaches Schools
Nine North Shore Schools

(Ten are public and three are private schools)