

Thornleigh Neighbourhood Residents Group

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Att: Director- Infrastructure Projects
Department of Planning and Environment
Application number- SSI 13_ 6146
Major Projects Assessment
GPO Box 39 Sydney NSW 2001

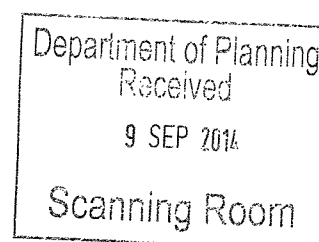


Submission on the proposed NorthConnex Tunnel

The Thornleigh Neighbourhood Residents Group was formalised in 1991 to focus on local community issues. Much of our concern since that time has been centred on Pennant Hills Road and the changes it has brought to our suburb with increased traffic and commercial interests.

The Thornleigh Neighbourhood Residents Group appreciates that for our suburb, air quality and easier access to Pennant Hills Road with fewer trucks on it will improve our environment, when the tunnel is completed. However a number of our members have lived through the widening of Pennant Hills Road with subsequent loss of St David's Church, the Thornleigh School of Arts, and the Thornleigh Public School. The loss of amenities and the fracturing of community remains with us. We are therefore aware that the building of the Thornleigh facility on Pennant Hills Road and the work station at Pioneer Avenue Thornleigh, will have quite serious social and environmental impacts on residents and businesses living near these sites.

The concerns that our members wish to highlight are safety, and moderating the impact of traffic, dust and noise during the preparation, construction and operation of the two Thornleigh sites at Trelawney Street and Pioneer Avenue. We are particularly concerned about the unintended impact on the adjoining local traffic networks.



Some of these **traffic concerns** are as follows-

Proximity of the Duffy Avenue/ Pennant Hills Road intersection to the *Trelawney Street Tunnel*

Support Facility and the *Pioneer Avenue Site Compound* which has the potential to make current traffic problems in the area much worse. During the four-year construction period the impact of tradesmen's vehicles, workers cars, construction vehicles like cement trucks and trucks carrying tunnel spoil will adversely impact on the current traffic routes. These routes include Pennant Hills Road, Duffy Avenue and Sefton Road/Chilvers Road/The Esplanade which is the main back route between Hornsby and Pennant Hills.

Intersection of Pennant Hills Road with Duffy Avenue

This is a bottleneck intersection at the moment. Any extra traffic banking up in Duffy Avenue could severely affect residents leaving Westleigh. There is a problem with traffic turning right out of Duffy Avenue onto Pennant Hills Road during peak hours caused by traffic travelling south blocking access to the intersection (Pennant Hills Road needs to be marked "keep clear" - up to Trelawney Street). Due to the bank up, vehicles turning out of Pioneer Avenue onto Duffy Avenue have visibility and exit problems, especially during peak hour.

The Sefton Road/Chilvers Road/The Esplanade route

This is the main back route between Pennant Hills and Hornsby and is usually backed up during peak hours. Traffic uses this route rather than Pennant Hills Road so the two routes are interconnected and impact on each other. The exit from the Pioneer Avenue site via Lymoore Ave will cause congestion around the Normanhurst West Primary School/Dartford Road bridge intersection particularly if traffic tries to turn east towards Hornsby.

Pioneer Avenue - Car park for workers vehicles

The access/egress impact of trucks during the demolition of selected buildings could cause difficulties. There is no spare street parking during the day in Pioneer Avenue. The idea of entry to the site via Pioneer Avenue and exit via Lymoore Avenue is a possible solution but potential congestion at the Lymoore Avenue/Sefton Road intersection needs to be thoroughly investigated.

The impact of 300 workers cars as they arrive and depart for their shifts will be substantial.

Clarification is needed as to whether it is intended all workers will park here or just the tunnel workers i.e. where will the demolition workers and the tradesmen working on the tunnel support facility leave their tradesmen's vehicles?

Industrial area bounded by Duffy Avenue, Chilvers Road, Sefton Road and the railway

There are already many large truck deliveries to this area which can hold up traffic at any time of the day. Duffy Avenue, Chilvers Road, Sefton Road and Dartford Roads together constitute a B-Double Route which causes additional problems in the area. Importantly, there are three concrete mixing facilities in this industrial area which if used during the construction process will greatly exacerbate the number of heavy vehicle movements.

In support of the statements made in the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020, we feel very strongly that a detailed traffic plan covering the Thornleigh sites and their surrounding locality needs to be carefully formulated by traffic consultants who are familiar with this area. In other words people who use Pennant Hills Road frequently themselves and are aware of how drivers behave in peak conditions and during the night.

Here are some suggestions which we believe may provide for safer options given the traffic conditions on Pennant Hills Road and its side streets.

Spoil from Thornleigh to be removed to southern tip-sites and similarly spoil from the Pennant Hills Road facility to go north, thus avoiding loaded trucks having to manoeuvre across busy Pennant Hills Road to change direction. Thus a loop could be established with trucks from the Thornleigh facility dumping in the south and returning north to collect spoil at the Pennant Hills facility which could be dumped in the north before they return to Thornleigh for the next load. Cost of serious accident and injury must be factored in to the decision if dump truck drivers are directed to cross three lanes of Pennant Hills Road, Thornleigh in the short space available before turning right in to Phyllis Avenue to negotiate a change of direction.

Workers vehicles including subcontractors not to be allowed to park at the Trelawney facility so that the space can be used by waiting trucks in order to keep them off Loch Maree and Trelawney Street and Pennant Hills Road. The exception to this being a small amount of parking to be reserved for emergency and visitors vehicles. The Pioneer Avenue work station is 5 – 10 minutes walk from Trelawney Street and shuttle buses should also be able to drop off and pick up workers. The Loch Maree lights are used by residents living on the east side of Pennant Hills Road who particularly do not like doing a right hand turn out of Nelson Street. A constant number of trucks waiting on Loch Maree could potentially force more people to use the dangerous option of the right hand turn out of Nelson.

Changing the light sequencing at Loch Maree intersection to give longer times for traffic movements. The present time allowed would barely get one large truck through this intersection.

Traffic lights on the north side of Loch Maree intersection to be moved back and the corner truncated to allow trucks more space to enter what is essentially a residential street aligned in the 1940's. The RMS will have information on the recent number of Thornleigh traffic light poles on corners of intersections with Pennant Hills Road which have been knocked down by large vehicles negotiating corners.

Signage to remind drivers that pedestrians also use the Loch Maree intersection. Residents through Loch Maree, Trelawney and round into Nelson, Greenhill and beyond, use this intersection as they walk to the railway station. The preferred route for rail users is to cross Pennant Hills Road at Loch Maree so as to avoid walking along Pennant Hills Road.

There is a bus stop outside 5 Loch Maree Avenue where school children are collected and dropped off. This should be moved further away from the Loch Maree entry to the Trelawney facility and the bus stop put into operation as soon as possible so that locals become familiar with it before North Connex traffic arrives. Moving it down the hill also means that visibility to children crossing the road will be reduced because of the bend in the road so that a pedestrian crossing would be a valuable safety addition.

Moderating the impact.

Those homes and businesses closest to the above ground facilities and work station will obviously suffer with a severe loss of amenity while building is in progress. Increased noise, dust and traffic are the major issues. It is important to residents to know that while building is in progress everything possible will be done to moderate the problems associated with the two and a half year building project.

Residents are therefore hopeful of the following-

Trucks carrying the estimated 492,200 cubic metres being extracted from the Thornleigh facility be either covered, or spoil watered down before leaving the site. Any spoil which escapes the trucks onto the road surfaces nearby to be immediately picked up and the area hosed down.

Given the volume of traffic movements and the long operational hours good acoustic barriers to be erected before work begins to reduce noise, and the height to be sufficient to screen demolition and the constant building activities from the surrounding neighbours.

We note your intention to notify as appropriate construction activities before they begin, including out of hours work, via email, newspaper advertisements and letterbox drops. Liaison with the surrounding area as you have outlined with at least five days warning before specified activity begins, is seen as vital given the proximity of the facility site to surrounding residences. An added help might be to notify radio stations so they can broadcast via their traffic updates any future disruptions to traffic on Pennant Hills Road or streets associated with NorthConnex activities.

It may also help if overhead signage could be used on Pennant Hills Road to alert through traffic to times when delays may be expected for various tunnel activities so that drivers who are able can use other routes or change their travel times.

Another issue after building is completed is that the Thornleigh facility shows a very uninspiring building looking more like a sound barrier and with very few trees to soften its bland appearance. This is in contrast to its twin facility at Pennant Hills where the artist impression shows that facility to be set back from Pennant Hills Road and well camouflaged by vegetation. Can the Thornleigh facility be improved to moderate its appearance from Pennant Hills Road?

There is a lot of scepticism that while the larger trucking companies will direct their drivers to use the tunnel, smaller firms with smaller and older trucks, will find ways to avoid the tunnel and we will have increasing numbers of trucks using Pennant Hills Road with impunity. Instead of the Kenley Park gantry containing cameras to collate information on truck movements, could cameras be placed on the Thornleigh overhead bridge at Station Street?

The local community would be happy to see the removal of the advertising on this bridge. Over the past almost 25 years there have been numerous end to end accidents as cars suddenly do left hand turns into Station Street on both sides of Pennant Hills Road. While there have been no fatalities, the eastern side of Station Street which has the access point for pedestrians using the footbridge, will soon experience a much greater volume of traffic with the opening of a newly built Aldi store. We know the advertising is a distraction to drivers not familiar with the road. The original agreement with the then RTA and residents and businesses following meetings in the late 1980's was that the bridge would be placed at Station Street if the community accepted advertising for 10 years to pay for its construction. We have now paid for multiple other bridges as well. The mix of high turnover grocery traffic, increasing pedestrian traffic accessing the train station along with another set of lights at the Wells Street Bridge makes this an over-worked section of road. Removing signage distractions in exchange for uninteresting cameras would be a safety improvement.

The cameras would also curtail those trucks seeking to find an alternative southern route to avoid detection. Those routes include using a left turn off the M1 on to the Pacific Highway, right on to Fox Valley Road, right on to the Comenarra Parkway, then left onto Pennant Hills Road. Using the west side trucks could enter Pennant Hills Road, turn right on to Normanhurst Road, left onto Milson Parade and Sefton Road before accessing Pennant Hills Road at Dartford Road or Duffy Avenue.

We suggest that there should be extensive community consultation when developing the traffic control plans relevant to each locality to ensure that all crucial issues are addressed, so that there is less likelihood of a flow-on of traffic problems to adjacent areas. Providing a NorthConnex traffic contact person for each of the major four localities might allow those communities some involvement in alerting and assisting in times of trauma e.g. bushfire or major accident.

We endorse the proposal in principle but are worried about the issues we have raised above and the need for them to be thoroughly investigated to ensure the least negative impact on the Thornleigh community, both during construction and afterwards when the tunnel is completed.

Submitted on behalf of the Thornleigh Neighbourhood Residents Group by -

David Mc Connell Chairman

Gwen Martin Secretary

5 September, 2014