

Objection to the Northern Beaches Tunnel Link

I am writing to most strongly object to the construction of the Northern Beaches road and tunnel link as outlined in the EIS on many grounds but am summarising just three most major concerns in order of priority that contain numerous sub-issues along the way. These three overarching buckets are the lack of consideration of a World Class Public Transport option, a total lack of consultation and transparency and the destructive nature on the lives and environment of the Balgowlah and Seaforth local community. So, each point in turn:

1. Why has the EIS, or the State government or the RMS/TfNSW in earlier times, not presented a sound and coherent argument for the proposed Balgowlah/Seaforth/Manly Vale 'road corridor' over other alternatives, particularly ones centred around Public Transport?

The selection of this corridor is not the natural one and I believe is in fact the most expensive and destructive one. In 2009 the NSW State government undertook a metro study which considered potential corridors for the Northern Beaches and the findings clearly showed that the corridor that would carry the largest number of peak hour passengers was Dee Why to Chatswood. This corridor would allow for the movement of nearly 33,000 vehicle passengers away from the road system and onto World Class Public Transport. Many major cities around the world have adopted a strong Public Transport policy – London, Paris, Madrid, Moscow to name just a few. Build more roads and we have more people choosing to use their cars and therefore more demand for more and more roads. It is a vicious circular form of insanity that only cities such as Los Angeles choose to embark upon.

The Grattan Institute states that: "Sydney's toll roads have not been designed to manage congestion". They are being built to increase tolls on roads in order to then fund more roads. In August 2020, the Chief Scientist released a study that states, "Movement of passengers and freight transportation to more efficient modes: for example, mode shifting from heavy road vehicles, cars and air modes to rail. Each train that runs during peak hour is estimated to reduce road traffic by 800 cars, with up to \$9 in congestion costs saved". Two sound arguments to move to modes of transport other than cars and over to Public Transport. I regularly travel by bus to the city, having sold my car some 18 years ago for environmental reasons. I cast my eyes out of the bus window only to note that at least 80-85% of cars heading south to the city and beyond

carry just one person. Why? Quite obviously because no viable alternative exists. The excellent B-Line was a positive move but needs to be vastly expanded.

The NSW State government is to be applauded for the current building and planning of the Sydney Metro System and the use of the Chatswood to Dee Why corridor would allow for the integration of the excellent Metro System to the Northern Beaches natural and already existing central population hub of Dee Why. It is also my understanding that this would be a financially more viable option to what is currently planned, certainly the more effective. The previous State premier Mike Baird (LNP) stated in 2016 that 'a train line needs to be considered' and whilst times have moved on there is so much logic to his argument and the only change to that observation would be that a cheaper and integrated Metro line merely supplants the rail alternative.

Instead, the EIS makes no mention of rail, Metro or other Public Transport alternatives that would be considerably more effective in environmental let alone financial terms. What we are being 'sold' is to have traffic funneled from the far Northern Beaches and goodness knows where else into the already congested Manly Vale/Balgowlah corridor for cars and trucks with minimal consideration given to 'accommodating' for the B-Line bus within the tunnel. Car gets to continue to reign supreme until population expansion creates more congestion leading to more demand for roads and so it goes on. Madness in the extreme!

2. Why has there been no true consultation with the community that will be most impacted by the construction of this proposed Beaches Link, but a great deal of lack of transparency throughout, including this EIS?

The word consultation means, "the action or process of formally consulting or discussing". This therefore clearly demands a two-way engagement. Whether it be the NSW State Government as a whole, the Premier, our elected state member – James Griffin, the TfNSW and the actual EIS, at no stage has 'consultation' taken place. Instead, we have been inundated from each of the individuals and bodies previously mentioned with a massive (and expensive) marketing/sell job. Every engagement has been undertaken in such a way that we have no alternative than to believe that the entire project is in fact a 'fait accompli'. I, along with many others, have written to the Premier, State

Environment Minister, the Minister for Transport, The Minister for Health (mostly with either no response or a stock standard justification that does not show any interest in listening) and attended most of the public forums undertaken by the RMS/TfNSW and it was clear the situation/decision was immovable. In fact, at one of the presentations at Balgowlah Boys High by the RMS/TfNSW and attended by the local member (James Griffin) and the Health Minister (Brad Hazzard) the latter two 'elected members' chose to depart before they could be subject to questions from the audience, those who had elect them.

The release of the EIS during the peak holiday period (schools closed and therefore kept in the dark) appears to be a continuation of this total disregard for the community most impacted and clearly designed to minimise and block the community from wading through 11,000 pages of sometimes extremely complex, detailed data. Add to this the refusal of our elected officials to grant an extension, says a total lack of transparency, and once again our conclusion can only be that the project is being handed to us as a 'fait accompli'. The TfNSW and therefore the EIS document is merely a way of ticking all the boxes for the political masters in Macquarie Street. Hardly a democratic process!

Speaking to many parents of children at particularly Balgowlah Boys High and Saint Cecilia's Catholic Primary school, which are the two schools closest to where my family and I live, then I hear only words of major concern for the health and welfare of their children during planned construction phase and thereafter. In fact, very many of these parents have until very recently either not heard or understand the detail and degree of impact that the project will have on their schools and therefore their children.

The total lack of Consultation and Transparency have resulted in so many of us losing all faith and trust in both political and public service bodies. We therefore question the accuracy and promises contained in community 'updates' (once again read, 'marketing') and within the EIS. For example, the use of outdated data in illustrations in Beaches Link 'updates' showing a more distant and longer Sydney Road access road, and used as recently as recently as late 2020, rather than the final much closer one. Additionally, the tiny and false marking that indicates positioning of the Balgowlah smokestack is in no way reflective of the

actual size (20m) that will eventuate if other Sydney metropolitan smokestacks are any indication. All unfiltered!

3. Why is there so very little coverage of the impact to the lives and the environment of the community most impacted, not fully explored or covered in an open, transparent and all-encompassing way within the EIS?

I live in Violet Street, Balgowlah and I just want to focus initially (for time reasons) on just two foreseeable impacts on local residents; one of which will be on local parking which is already at a premium due to the current parking needs of staff and boys from Balgowlah Boys High. With Tunnel building underway there will be additionally, hundreds if not thousands of workers who will also be looking for parking spots in surrounding streets which will add to the chaos already existing.

The second major predictable impact will be the increase of 'rat runs' for the entire construction period and quite possibly beyond. Taking just Violet Street and Audrey Street in Balgowlah, both of which have no entry signs covering the hours of 6-10am Monday to Friday, and we have experienced a steady increase in the illegal use of these two streets as rat runs for drivers coming from further east as they attempt to find a faster route via Ethel Street to the Seaforth roundabout or back down to Sydney Road by means of Maretimo and Coral Street. These rat runs will increase regardless of any claim to the contrary.

Neither of the above two points have been adequately covered in the EIS.

There are other major and destructive impacts for the local community.

The diagrams within the EIS show 'researched' flow of pollution from the Balgowlah smokestack that do not cast any pollution over Balgowlah Boys High, but do flow over St Cecilia's Catholic Primary. Why is this false projected flow the case? To have any flow of polluting waste over either school, or local residents, is totally unacceptable, but one of the explanations proffered as to why no impact on Balgowlah Boys is that the wind does not blow from the north to the school or immediate surrounds. This is a total and utter falsehood and I invite anyone to come and join us on a windy day and experience the full force of a

northerly on us. It is not of course just Carbon Monoxide that will descend on us but brake particles, tarmac residue and a multitude of other pollutants that will spill out from the tunnel. Many studies from around the globe do *not* minimise the potential damage to health that the EIS seems to belittle or justify.

As a concerned citizen I do of course have great concern for the health of local young children as well as those who attend the local schools from further afield, but I add to that a concern to my own health as an asthmatic as well as all those residents regardless of their current health levels.

Education Minister Rob Stokes stated (Ref. Sydney Morning Herald 2018, October if I recall correctly) “there is no way in hell I will countenance exhaust stacks being built anywhere near a school”. A NSW Parliamentary Legislative Council report in December 2018 stated that filtration is possible and recommended. The study recommended that “the NSW Government install, on all current and future motorway tunnels, filtration in order to reduce the level of pollution emitted from ventilation stacks”. The current Premier Gladys Berejiklian argued very vigorously against the use of unfiltered Smokestacks during the building of the Lane Cove tunnel on the basis of the unacceptable negative impact on health.

All three very compelling reasons supporting filtration that are not included or covered in any meaningful way in the EIS!

The next major consideration the local community have is regards the planned desecration of our precious physical environment. One of the first steps of the planned project is to place traffic lights at the bottom of Maretino street, our access point to Sydney Road, and build the link road through to where the tunnel is to be bored. This will immediately mean the destruction of mature trees on the northern side of Sydney road adjacent to Balgowlah Golf Club. That is only the beginning as more trees within and around the golf course will suffer the same demise. That results in loss of nearly all of our accessible green space, the danger to and probable loss of native species, a reduction in water flow by 79% during construction and a 96% reduction to surface water in Burnt Bridge Creek that the native species (eg Flying foxes) rely upon. Add to that the pollution from the smokestack that will affect the health of all remaining animals and birds (if any survive that is). It is claimed in the

EIS that eventually the trees that are felled in order to facilitate construction of the tunnel and link road will be replaced. If this is the case, and I doubt it for reasons stated earlier, young trees do not replace the habitat required by native animals and birds and certainly do not do anywhere near the job of eliminating the 48 pounds of carbon dioxide from the air as do large mature trees. Furthermore, mature trees play a vital part in absorbing ammonia, nitrogen oxide, ozone and sulfur dioxide as well as filtering and then trapping pollutant particles in leaves and trunks.

I could keep going here by adding the damage and destruction along the Wakehurst Parkway, the 5-10 years of construction noise and congestion (and I do mean a possible 10 years total if other road/transport projects are any consideration) increased time of travel for residents close to the construction site, loss of Balgowlah Oval, 24 hour work with noisy trucks waiting to enter and depart the construction site, stir up of toxic sediment in our local waterways, unclear explanation in the EIS as to removal of waste, the installation of new lighting on Wakehurst Parkway which will adversely impact existing wildlife, the inadequately covered removal of both toxic waste and otherwise, from where, to where, along which routes and at what hours.....

All this for a relatively short term reduction of travel time along Military Road of 14.5%! and no consideration given to a far more viable option of world class public transport such as a Metro link from Dee Why to Chatswood. See earlier point – traffic levels will be back to current levels within 3-5 years of a tunnel being built and then..... a drive for more and wider roads, destroying more of the environment and demanding increased population with more roads. And so it continues ad nauseum.

In summary I have highlighted in order the lack of any number of viable options to the Tunnel Link, in particular any consideration of the use of the logical Metro corridor link from Chatswood to Dee Why. I have made much of the frustrating lack of any real consultation process and the consistent absence of transparency from both State government and TfNSW. I have concluded with a hefty summary of the enormously negative impact on the local Balgowlah and Seaforth community in the medium to long term – the community who will benefit least from this

project. I have also touched on many other issues that time does not permit me to cover in detail such as – destruction of flora and fauna, dredging and removal of toxic waste, rat runs, resident street parking, the polluting effects of smokestacks, the false promises and disinterest of the Premier, Cabinet Ministers and our local member etc.

Is this submission to be dismissed in the same manner adopted by our elected elite or is TfNSW to adopt a higher moral ground, go back to the drawing board and show us that a World Class public Transport System is not just viable, an efficient means of moving people, respectful of the environment and financially sound, but truly meeting the needs of the whole population, not just those north of Manly Vale?

I thank you for your time and consideration.