

28th February 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to voice my concerns about the proposed Beaches Link Tunnel and the impacts on the North Balgowlah community and the local environment.

I hope you will consider the points I raise below and assure me, and the wider community that the impacts to us and the local environment will be negligible.

Justification for the Tunnel

CONCERNS:

- The EIS indicates only a minimal reduction in traffic on military road through Mosman. I am concerned that the disruption and use of public money to achieve this outcome is not cost effective
- I am also concerned about where the traffic ends up once it spills out into Balgowlah/Seaforth? Local roads, beaches and open spaces were unable to cope with the influx of visitors over the 2020/21 Christmas period. Increasing the volume of traffic onto local streets will cause further congestion for local residents.
- A further concern is the use of public money to build what will probably become a tolled road.
- In addition, our local area of North Balgowlah has been hit with a surprise new bus timetable over the 2020/21 Christmas period which removed well used buses and introduced services which are not fit for purpose (children unable to reach schools on time/ bus changes required of school children, express buses that now take longer to reach the city etc.). It would seem that NSW Transport are encouraging private vehicle use over public transport options, which is not what the community wants.

I OBJECT to the construction of the Beaches Link Tunnel based on no valid business case. Investment in public transport solutions is the preferred solution

REQUESTS:

- I request further modelling be completed based on changed working patterns following COVID. Our household now travels into the city significantly less than 18 months ago. We are not the only household where this is the case. The 2016 'traffic volume trends' upon which this proposal is built on, does not reflect changed working habits.
- I request an explanation of why there is not greater investment in public transport systems across the northern beaches rather than investing \$14bn in a tunnel that is modelled on outdated data and modelling.

The Impacts of Construction

CONCERNS:

- The construction phase of the project will undoubtedly impact North Balgowlah residents with dust, noise, vibration, and heavy vehicle traffic in the area. North Balgowlah will have construction surrounding most of the suburb and the EIS indicates that during construction there will be.

- Over 3,000 vehicles per day across all sites.
- 1,690 vehicles per day at the Balgowlah Golf Course site alone.
- 1.5 heavy vehicles every minute or 4.5 vehicles (total) every minute.
- Over 4,000 homes subjected to excessive noise
- Construction work to proceed 24/7 for up to 7 years.

I OBJECT to this level of disruption for North Balgowlah residents due to the distress it will cause, and the impacts it will have on mental health with people living through a 24/7 construction zone for up to 7 years.

REQUEST

- I request you reconsider how to ensure that the impact of trucks/vehicles is not felt on the suburban streets that are already hard to navigate with local traffic and buses. Ensure areas around schools and parks are not impacted and are safe for families and children to walk or ride around the local community. Disincentivise commuters looking to use our streets as a rat run to save time from congestion and money from using the toll roads.
- I request you guarantee compensation for any damage to property caused by vibrations due to tunnelling.

Environmental Impacts: Land

CONCERNS:

- The loss of over 3000 trees, mainly along Wakehurst Parkway and Flat Rock which are both wildlife corridors. Burnt Bridge Creek and surrounds will be destroyed due to a possible 96% reduction in water flow. During COVID, this Creek was a lifeline for everyone in the area. Local residents walked, rode, scooted and skated along the Creek. We are extremely lucky to have such spectacular bushland and wildlife on our doorsteps in a city. To destroy this would be extremely damaging to the local environment and the well-being of local residents.
- The EIS details 23 threatened species that will be negatively impacted. Hundreds of other species will also lose their habitat, be cut off from bushland, or be driven away. The proposed project counteracts the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development in the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991 (NSW) which declares that the conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be of fundamental consideration (PEAA Act Part 3(2)(c)).
- I am concerned that the NSW government has failed to deliver conservation offsets in the past. For example, 15 years after the M7 opened to traffic the state government has not yet established a public reserve that was proposed as the major environmental offset for the motorway's construction. Both the auditor general and the review of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, led by Graeme Samuel, criticised Australia's offsets regime as opaque, poorly designed and managed and lacking in regulation.

I OBJECT to this environmental destruction. Once we destroy these areas, we can never return them to their natural state.

REQUEST:

- I request a full assessment of biodiversity in and around the areas to be destroyed be conducted and guarantees to local residents that any 'offsets' are implemented within a reasonable timeframe.

Environmental Impacts: Water

CONCERNS:

- I have great concern about the impacts on the harbour given “contamination has been reported in sediments present within Middle Harbour and west of Spit West Reserve. Contamination is likely to be associated with inputs from the surrounding urbanised catchments and general maritime use within the harbour. The sediments pose a high contamination risk to construction.” (EIS APP M, Page 93-94).
- Sludge in middle harbour contains PFAS chemicals and heavy metals. (A recent review from the U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] outlines a host of health effects associated with PFAS exposure including cancer, liver damage, decreased fertility and increased risk of asthma and thyroid disease <https://www.propublica.org/article/suppressed-study-the-epa-underestimated-dangers-of-widespread-chemicals>) Tributyltin has also been detected (a chemical that cause female sea snails to develop male sex organs and become sterile)
- The ‘silt curtains’ do not go all the way to the seabed, allowing a risk of contamination to be released into Middle Harbour. This risks the safety of those using the harbour for recreational purposes. Silt dispersion modelling in relation to contaminated sediment has been done for a period of ‘1.2’ weeks but this is less than the time required to remove contaminated sediment. The dredging program is forecast to be 37 weeks. The modelling should cover the time it will take to remove the contaminated sediment.
- The current EIS fails to consider the effects of toxins released into the water on the local environment of Sydney harbour.
- Given the Sydney Metro – Chatswood to Sydenham EIS stated that an immersed tube design was assessed and not selected due to the high contamination risks to Sydney harbour I am concerned that this contamination risk has been overlooked.
- The risk of contaminants moving down from the tip site as the capping is disturbed and pockets of leachate are released, has not been assessed in terms of risks to human health and yet the EIS acknowledges the risk of run off to surrounding waterways and middle harbour. The EIS acknowledges the risk of workers encountering contamination but does not assess the potential of bushwalkers, sporting groups, sailing clubs etc coming into contact with contaminants.
- The discharge of 428,000 litres per day of wastewater into Queenscliff Lagoon & beach will be hazardous for people and animals swimming in these waterways.

I OBJECT to the potentially harmful levels of contamination in the harbour and waterways and the lack of modelling and investigation into the impacts of this contamination.

REQUEST:

- I request for testing to be completed and published for all contaminated sites.
- I request a health risk assessment on the impacts of recreational use of the harbour and waterways on individuals. Will the harbour, lagoons and beaches become unsafe for swimmers, sailors and divers?
- I request more extensive measures to contain contamination disturbed in construction.
- I request modelling on the impacts of sediment disturbance on marine life in the harbour
- I request contaminated sediment not to be barged out of Middle Harbour past Clontarf, Balmoral and other beaches due to the risk of spills and further pollution to highly utilised recreational swimming locations. If this is impossible, I request a detailed remediation plan on how to deal with spills/accidents and how this will be budgeted for.

- I request silt dispersion modelling to cover the 37 week dredging timeline and also the use of silt curtains that reach the sea floor and are not permeable.
- I request another crossing option be investigated given the known contaminants in the harbour and the significant risk of disturbance and pollution.
- I request the EIS assess the risk to bushwalkers, sporting groups, sailing clubs etc of coming into contact with contaminants as a result of run-off.

Health: Ventilation Stacks

CONCERNS

- Global health experts agree that pollution from traffic exhaust poses serious health risks. Emissions include nitrous oxides and particulate matter that, when breathed into the lungs, causes respiratory diseases such as asthma and emphysema, and cancer. There are several schools, preschools, childcare centres, and sporting fields within the vicinity of all the proposed ventilation stacks and from a parent's point of view, the increased level of pollution is unacceptable. Gladys Berejiklian called the filtration of stacks "ethically right in the interests of health" in relation to the Land Cove Tunnel and yet we are being told that unfiltered stacks are now acceptable. Berejiklian said "Members of Parliament should examine their conscience and consider how they would feel if their children or the children of loved ones were exposed to this level of fumes every day and they were part of a government that could have put in place measures to reduce the impact of the fumes". Given that Berejiklian is now Premier, she has the power to make the change from unfiltered to filtered stacks. In the UK in December 2020 a Coroner's Court found that air pollution 'Made a material contribution' to the death of a child living in London near a busy road. Why would we allow our children to be exposed to more pollution that is necessary when it has been recognised that elevated levels of pollution can have significant, even fatal outcomes. This is even pointed out on page 64, Appendix I, Health, where the modelling indicates Seaforth Public School and Balgowlah North Public School will both see increased hospitalisations for children 0-14 and increased deaths.

I OBJECT to the use of unfiltered ventilation stacks.

REQUEST

- I request stacks be equipped with full filtration to minimize these impacts. At the very least the air pollution is kept at the current levels.

Health: Particulates during construction

CONCERNS:

- The EIS notes that "Unsealed areas adjacent to Warringah Freeway may be contaminated with lead, hydrocarbons and asbestos as a result of the current and historical disposition of particulates from large volume traffic flows since its opening."

I OBJECT to any spoil being left outside with no containment

REQUEST:

- I request strict dust control measures to be in place with no spoil to be left outside sheds and an alert style air quality monitoring

- I request an alert style monitor near children's playing fields that sporting groups and parents can subscribe to determine if playing sport is a safe option given the potential for contaminated dust and heavy vehicle emissions to be high

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Additional Recreational Impacts

CONCERNS

- In addition to impacts on the recreational use of waterways, I am concerned the tunnel construction will impact the use of Manly Dam for mountain biking. Specifically, making it impossible for mountain bikers to complete the manly dam 'loop'.

I OBJECT to the Manly Dam 'loop' being cut off. This is a high traffic mountain bike track, used by locals and others. I do not want to see this removed.

REQUESTS

- I request that the Manly Dam biking track is maintained and not cut off.

In summary – I fundamentally object to this project.

Thank you for considering these points

Melissa Gooch